

sojourners

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Faith in Action for Social Justice

Sweet Justice?

The challenge of nonviolence in an age of neo-Nazis.

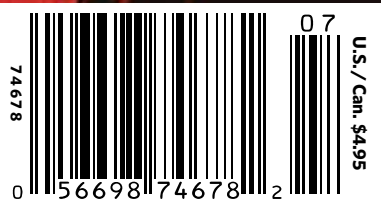


PLUS:

Why men
should preach
on sexual
assault

Trump inflames
the Middle East

Cuban
Christians
after Castro



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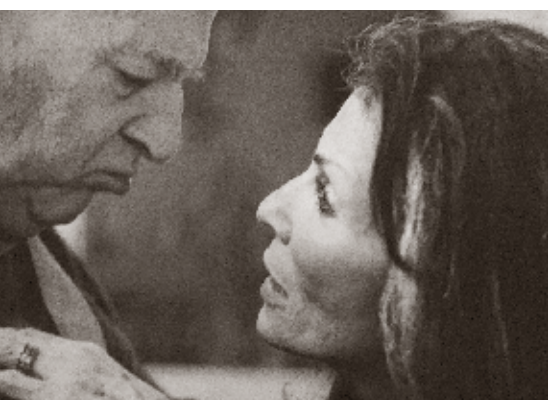
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LEARN FROM DIVERSE VOICES

To see the world renewed, we need to read broadly from every context.

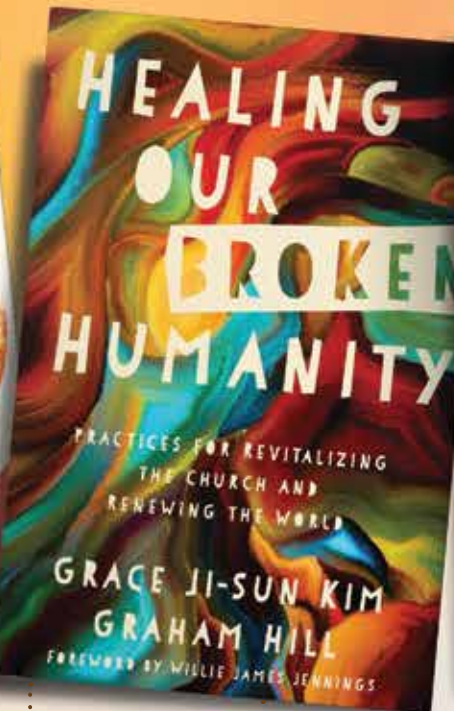


KATHY KHANG

"[Kathy's] words walk alongside us, push us, and put us on notice that **using our voices for the sake of justice, holiness, and truth telling is important and necessary work.** As Kathy raises her own voice, she inspires me to do the same."

AMENA BROWN,

spoken-word poet, author of *How to Fix a Broken Record*



GRACE JI-SUN KIM

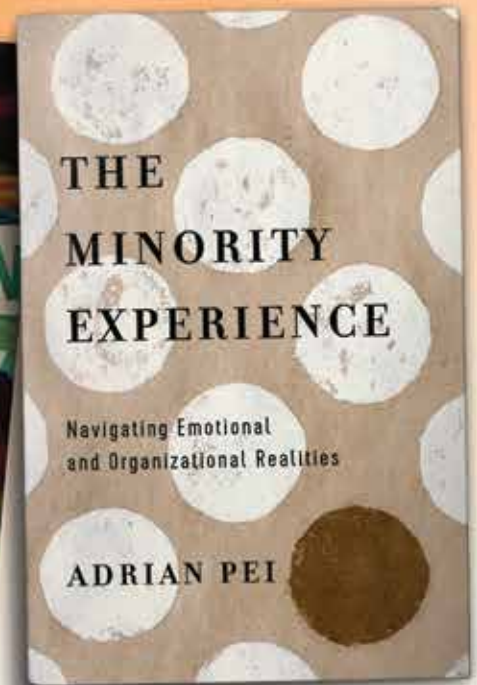


GRAHAM HILL

"There are many books dealing with diversity and reconciliation. Of all those books, including my own, I believe *Healing Our Broken Humanity* is **the most relevant, hands-on, how-to manual on the subject you will encounter!**"

RANDY S. WOODLEY,

author of *Shalom and the Community of Creation*



ADRIAN PEI

"Rooted in specific stories and practical examples, this book is **a must-read for any culturally competent organization.** Adrian provides clear and vulnerable insight into the experience of ethnic minorities in many dominant-culture-led organizations."

SANDRA MARIA VAN OPSTAL,

author of *The Next Worship*

EVERY SUMMER, we pause our magazine work to spend a few days at The Summit for Change, a gathering of faith and justice leaders hosted by Sojourners. Held at historic Gallaudet University, The Summit is Sojourners' homecoming for old friends and new and also a time to practice two overlooked justice activities: honoring and blessing.

The first group of people we honor at The Summit are elders, leaders who've paved the way for us to follow. The elders we've honored over the years—including Rep. John Lewis, Marie Dennis, Walter Brueggemann, Ruby Sales, John Perkins—are heroes. We thank them for their pioneering leadership, learn from their wisdom, and ask for their blessing on our own work.

But we also honor new leaders—folks

whose names may not be widely known but whose commitment to social justice is unmistakable. We recognize them for their efforts to create a more equitable and peaceful world before we offer our blessing on their work that lies ahead.

In this issue, you'll find profiles of the five leaders honored as "movement honorees" at The Summit 2018: organizers, pastors, investors, activists, and lawyers, people who've found creative ways to counter injustice. Though these honorees have faced extraordinary circumstances, they exemplify the work to which all of us are called: "What I did last summer, and what others did with me, is something that other people can do," said Brittany Caine-Conley,



an honoree who helped organize the counter-demonstration to the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Va., last August. "It's really about building a relationship

and showing up."

Our cover story grew from a conversation among our editors shortly after Charlottesville: What does Christian nonviolence look like in the context of resurgent neo-Nazis and violent white supremacists? When we posted a question on social media—"Is it okay for a Christian to punch a Nazi?"—the responses, excerpted in these pages, revealed a range of provocative thoughts and opinions on Jesus and nonviolence. We think that's a conversation worth having. ■

Letters

Seeking Alternatives

David LaGrand's commentary "Imprisoned by Poverty" (May 2018) calls attention to an issue with our justice system, namely how bail can create severe problems for people who cannot come up with the necessary funds. This leads me to a practical question. We often hear reports of model bills that the American Legislative Exchange Council is presenting to state legislatures, trying to get undesirable policy made into law. My question is: Is there a good alternative to ALEC? Once Michigan and other states have thought about the problem and come up with a solution, would it be possible to get model legislation that we could present to members of our state legislatures? Perhaps we could get advice about the most effective way to bring such issues to their attention.

Norm Mundhenk
Poulsbo, Washington

Soft Bigotry

I was fascinated to read Eboo Patel's column "The Trouble with Identity Politics" (May 2018). To make the point as broadly as I think is reasonable, the problem is that identity politics can dehumanize individuals by painting them with the broad brush of a determined identity. Every individual

God does not select according to race, cultural heritage, or political association.

has value, and it is important to avoid the lazy tendency to oversimplify people by clumping them together in easily recognizable groups and then simply assuming some stereotypical group ethic or belief will apply equally to all so clumped. There are Republican-leaning voters who are deeply concerned about poverty and the environment. There are gun owners who espouse stricter gun regulations in America. There are liberal Americans who are pro-life—and more, if you adopt Sister Joan Chittister's broad definition of the term as embracing all lives and not just the lives of the unborn.

There is no single belief or theory held dear uniformly by the entirety of any group of people, and to shoehorn people into a presumed set of beliefs based on an easily recognized category is just a form of soft bigotry, and is to be avoided. God loves us for who we are, despite what we do, and does not select according to our race, cultural heritage, or political associations.

Scott Anderson
Golden Beach, Maryland

Prejudice Isn't (Only) a Southern Thing

Dear Ed Spivey Jr.: Please do not mistake my Southern accent for ignorance or prejudice. Your column in the May 2018 issue ("I Could Stick My Head in the Sand") said as much. Unfortunately, our nation is full of prejudice. Please stop spreading the myth that it is exclusive to the South. Otherwise, I enjoyed your column. Especially the part about being afraid when the president is "awake" (you really should have added those quotation marks around the word awake).

James Halliday
LaFayette, Georgia

Clarification: The May 2018 commentary "What Hurricane María Revealed," by Alexandra Rosado-Román, stated that "the 1920 Jones Act only allows entrance to [Puerto Rico] by U.S. ships." The act pertains to goods shipped between U.S. ports.

My turn! Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, Sojourners, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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Sojourners magazine (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

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BY JIM WALLIS

100 Sermons



THIS SPRING, more than 2,500 Southern Baptist women published a letter denouncing the misogyny and apparent toleration of domestic abuse exhibited by Paige Patterson, then head of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and one of the Southern Baptist Convention's most influential leaders.

These women are speaking truth to power at a critical time, affirming that “the Bible’s elevated view of womanhood,” as they put it, is completely incompatible with Patterson having counseled a woman who was being physically abused by her husband to keep quiet and pray for her husband, and with Patterson’s sexually objectifying comments about a 16-year-old girl. (In late May, Patterson was removed from his position as president of the seminary.)

The letter was a real risk for the signers in a religious world as con-

churches, as in broader society, too seldom speak up on these issues.

A few years ago, Sojourners commissioned a poll of clergy across the country. We found that 65 percent of pastors speak once a year or less about sexual and domestic violence; 1 out of 10 pastors never address this topic. These distressing facts correlate with another of our findings: 74 percent of pastors underestimate how prevalent sexual and domestic violence is in their own congregations.

For our churches to be safe communities that offer protection and healing for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, pastors need to preach regularly on these topics and pastor in ways that protect and empower women.

TO THAT END, Sojourners has issued a call for 100 sermons against domestic and sexual violence. Our goal is to highlight churches that are speaking out against domestic and sexual violence from the pulpit and to inspire others to do the same. Once we collect 100 sermons, we will spotlight them on our website, with resources for combatting domestic and sexual violence in faith spaces.

We’ve received about 60 sermons so far, and they are powerful, moving proclamations of the word of God. We can’t wait to share them with you. But there’s also a problem: We’ve only received 10 sermons from men, which represents just 17 percent of our total. Given that men make up 91 percent of all senior pastors leading congregations, this is a striking and sobering disparity. Of course, the fact that the pastors leading churches in the U.S. are so overwhelmingly male is a function of the deeply engrained structures of patriarchy in the church. Since women are much more likely than

men to be victims of domestic or sexual abuse, it is understandable why women pastors might be more likely to preach on this topic, but the fact that we understand why this dynamic exists does not make it acceptable.

That’s why I’m writing this—to urge male clergy to preach on domestic and sexual violence this year and tell us about it so we can include your sermons in our series. Even more important, of course, is that you preach on these topics regularly as part of a visible and holistic commitment to combat domestic and sexual violence in your congregations and beyond.

Opposing domestic and sexual violence openly and explicitly, including providing practical resources for faith communities to combat this evil, is an essential element of faithful Christian witness. If we believe that how we treat the most vulnerable is how we treat Christ, we must be in deep solidarity with the women and men who experience domestic or sexual abuse at some point in their lives. If we believe that we are all created in the image of God, we cannot tolerate that only half of U.S. churches have a plan for assisting victims of abuse. If we believe that in Christ “there is no longer male or female,” it’s time for men to do their part to make that vision of God’s love a reality in our churches and in the world.

Responding to the witness of the Southern Baptist women, *Washington Post* columnist Michael Gerson wrote, “the founder of Christianity was radical in his elevation of women to equality in God’s kingdom.” If we are followers of that same Christ, so should we be. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

Opposing domestic and sexual violence is an essential element of faithful Christian witness.

servative as the SBC, but it quickly opened up a needed conversation in the denomination and beyond.

We should be grateful for and inspired by the courageous witness of women in the church and broader society who are saying #MeToo and demanding accountability for predatory behavior and the pervasive sexism that creates an environment where sexual harassment and assault too often thrive. Too few men have demonstrated sufficient commitment to end domestic and sexual violence and dismantle the patriarchal system that undergirds them. Changes in both personal attitudes and structures are needed. Men in our



Catholic activists prior to entering the Kings Bay naval base in Georgia to protest nuclear weapons.

Kings Bay Plowshares

By John Gehring

Put Down Your Nukes and Step Away

What “realism” looks like in the age of nuclear weapons.

THE ARREST OF SEVEN Catholic activists from the Plowshares movement who entered a nuclear submarine base in April again highlights the enduring threats posed by nuclear weapons. The Kings Bay Plowshares carried religious banners promoting peace onto the naval base in Georgia that houses Trident submarines armed with missiles with nuclear warheads. “This weapons system is a cocked gun being held to the head of the planet,” the activists said in a statement as they were arrested.

At a time when President Trump reportedly told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the U.S. would win a nuclear arms race between the two countries, nuclear disarmament efforts feel tenuous. Former U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, who helped broker the Iran nuclear agreement, has warned that the chance of a nuclear launch is “higher than it’s been

since the Cuban missile crisis.”

Against this backdrop, the clock is ticking on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed in 2010 by President Obama and Russia’s then-President Dmitry Medvedev that limits strategic warheads and

The history of social change is the story of faithful dissenters and dogged activists.

delivery systems in the two countries. Unless action is taken to extend that agreement, it will expire in 2021. If that happens, for the first time in more than 40 years the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals would operate free of an arms control agreement.

The Pentagon released a nuclear arms policy in February that requests two new types of nuclear weapons, essentially ending the Obama administration’s efforts to reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Defense Secretary

Jim Mattis described the changes as a need to “look reality in the eye” and to “see the world as it is, not as we wish it to be.”

Forgive me for my eye roll, but I will look to someone else for a clear moral vision.

Pope Francis offers a saner path, and one that you don’t have to be religious to affirm. The pope told a Vatican conference on disarmament last fall that nuclear weapons exist “in the service of a mentality of fear

that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race.” The pope condemned not only “the threat of their use” but also “their very possession.” While previous popes spoke out against nuclear arms, Pope Francis is the first to specifically condemn the possession of nuclear weapons. He has made the cause a leading diplomatic priority of his papacy.

Envisioning our world nuclear-free requires confronting what Pope Francis

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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All other air service overseas (one to two weeks delivery): \$59.95 one year. Except where noted, payable in U.S. currency.

Newsstand Circulation

Newsstand circulation through Disticor Magazine Distribution Services. For more information, call (905) 619-6565, fax (905) 619-2903, or email mraucci@disticor.com.

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Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper.



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describes as the blood money of the global weapons trade. More than 50 years ago, Dwight Eisenhower warned of a “military-industrial complex” and highlighted the self-sustaining relationship between the government and corporations whose financial bottom lines benefited from a perpetual state of war preparations.

The problem is much worse today. A recent report finds that more than 300 financial institutions invested more than \$525 billion into the top 20 companies involved in the production and modernization of nuclear weapons over the past several years. The top 10 financial institutions with the biggest investments in making nuclear weapons—including Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, and Citigroup—are all U.S. firms.

Debates over nuclear weapons and ballooning military budgets should never be framed as a contest between clear-eyed

pragmatists and naive idealists. The world is a dangerous place. People of faith work in conflict zones every day. Along with moral clarity, religious leaders and institutions bring on-the-ground experience.

We can look reality in the eye, as Mattis put it, and also believe another world is possible. The history of social change is the story of faithful dissenters and dogged activists being told that things are inevitable, and then having the moral imagination to prove conventional wisdom wrong.

The nuclear status quo is a nightmare waiting to happen, as the Catholics arrested in Georgia make clear. Let’s dream of something saner and secure. And then organize to make that vision real. ■

John Gehring, Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, is author of The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope’s Challenge to the American Catholic Church.

By Faith-Marie Zamblé

Minimalist Chic or Simple Gifts?

The new minimalism looks an awful lot like the system it was designed to critique.

CERTAIN STRAINS of consumerism are easy to spot. Think Beverly Hills and walls stacked with brightly colored shoes and purses, like heaps of fresh produce. Closer to home, perhaps, is the caricature of suburban consumption—gas-guzzling SUVs, expensive outerwear.

And then there’s minimalism, an ideology defined by its emphasis on intentional efforts to spend less. At its best, minimalism provides a healthy alternative for people of faith seeking simplicity and thoughtful economic practices. At its worst, the minimalist aesthetic looks an awful lot like the system it was designed to critique—oblivious, privileged, and disconnected from reality.

“You need less stuff than you think!” minimalists cry, their authentic Peruvian bracelets clinking together in agreement. From a theological perspective, the minimalists are right. From a social perspective, they’re missing a critical caveat: A person can make do with

less if they have more. Would the person whose closet consists of three shirts out of necessity be considered a minimalist? Probably not, because minimalism is marketed to and for the wealthy. Somehow, the exhortation to “buy less” has morphed into “buy less, but buy expensively—I mean, ethically!”

With corporations vying for both our wallets and our hearts, where and how a person spends her money matters. The choice to invest in an item, and its maker, rather than enter the breakneck cycle of throwaway consumerism, is shot through with good intent. It is also a choice threaded with privilege.

In a world that often links a person’s value to the amount she can consume, the desire to take one’s fiscal habits seriously is radical—and for people of faith, essential. But after we look at our daily practices, we need to ask why we have so many resources while others have so few. We need to

The rich young ruler wasn’t told to sell all he had as a way to make room for more.

From the Archives

July 1987

Exposing Sexism

How are we to deal with the evil of sexism in the church and society? I believe Elizabeth Cady Stanton's insight that there is no way of eradicating sexism from society unless it is eradicated from the church first is still valid, for the institutional church has a powerful influence in shaping society's perception of reality. If it is perceived in the language, teaching, and behavior of the institutional churches ... that God is imaged only as male, then society has received religion's example and approval of its oppression of women.

As I ponder this question, I am reminded of the nonviolent resistance of Gandhi in India and of Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States. A scene from the movie *Gandhi* is particularly meaningful to me. It is the scene in which all day long waves and waves of Indians marched toward the salt mines and were brutally beaten back by the British soldiers. The Indians offered no physical resistance and were carried away to be cared for by their wives and children. At the end of the day, a U.S. newspaper reporter rushes to a telephone to report the story of the nonviolent resistance. He begins it by saying, "Today England lost India. Today England lost its moral credibility in India." ... What was going on is at the heart of nonviolent resistance, that is, the naming of the unholy, the exposing of evil. ... What nonviolent resistance does is reveal the immorality of an oppressive system. ■

Johnette Putnam, OSB, was a Benedictine Sister in Covington, La., when this article appeared.



look compassionately at broken systems that make poorer folks feel that their worth is directly proportional to the things they own. We must confront toxic materialism even within ourselves.

Buying handmade items, decluttering our lives, or shifting the palette of our wardrobes to grayscale are value-neutral choices that only accrue ethical value when other areas of our lives also shift. If our hearts do not grow larger in proportion to the spaces we clear in our homes, if we do not discipline our unruly consumerist impulses, minimalism is nothing more than a class signifier disguised as social consciousness.

Privilege shouldn't pressure us into guilt-stricken immobility. After all, Christians are called to examine privilege when we have it and use it for the common good.

Fortunately, in true biblical fashion, there are conditions for this. When Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had, the next step wasn't for him to turn around and buy fewer (but more elegant) items from Anthropologie. The next step was to give the money to the poor. Are we willing to give up what insulates us from our neighbors' suffering because we trust that God will provide, because our resources are better spent in the service of others?

Though the quest for less stuff is a noble one, without self-awareness minimalism can quickly become a shallow fix for the more complicated work of economic justice and spiritual depth. ■

Faith-Marie Zablé is an editorial assistant of Sojourners magazine.

By Reta Halteman Finger

Christians in Post-Castro Cuba

Some churches have embraced Cuba's revolutionary socialism more than others.

IN MARCH, I visited Cuba on a 10-day tour with alumni from Eastern Mennonite University. I've studied the socialist structure of the early Jerusalem church (as recounted in Acts 2-6), and I wanted to experience Cuban socialism directly and see how it compares. How, for example, have Christian churches fared under a one-party socialist government?

On our visit, we heard about Cuba's successes in the areas of health care and education. We heard a lecture on the massive effort to bring Cuba's average level of education from third grade in 1959 to the current 11th grade. We learned about Cuba's universal free health care, and that local clinics throughout the island provide basic care accessible to every citizen. As a result, infant mortality is lower than in the U.S. and overall life expectancy is about the same, according to *The Atlantic*—even though the U.S. spends more than 10 times as much per person per year on health care.

Such basic needs have been met not by Christian churches but by a government that initially robbed the wealthy and shared it with the poor. What were Christians in Cuba—Catholics, Protestants, Anabaptists, and Jehovah's Witnesses—to make of this

enormous shift toward economic equality? After the revolution, most missionaries returned to their home countries, and thousands of Cubans, Christians and otherwise, fled to the United States. Christians who remained had to rethink their mission in a society where the poor were educated and healed through structural change rather than individual charity.

In the decades since, some churches have embraced Cuba's revolutionary socialism more than others. The growth of Latin American liberation theology in the 1980s helped some Catholic and Protestant churches bridge the divide, and the Cuban government also took steps toward more harmonious relationships. In 1992, the constitution was changed to permit, on paper, complete religious freedom. Atheism was no longer required for membership in the Cuban Communist Party. Popes John Paul II, Benedict, and Francis were warmly received when they visited the island.

Some of us accidentally met a Presbyterian pastor when we walked through the open door of his church on Maundy Thursday while he discussed with a large group of members how to better serve their community. On the other hand,

conservative Anabaptist groups maintain a traditional separation between church and state. According to César García, president of Mennonite World Conference, the Brethren in Christ are one of the few legally recognized churches among Anabaptist groups in Cuba. With nearly 200 congregations and growing, Brethren in Christ remain intentionally autonomous from the government and value both socialism and some earlier Cuban traditions.

Havana's Ebenezer Baptist Church, with its Martin Luther King Center next door, has

The ongoing U.S. embargo against Cuba contributes to its poverty.

embraced socialism and gender equality more than most churches. Longtime pastor Raúl Suárez is an Anabaptist and served in Cuba's parliament for many years. Viewing socialism through Martin Luther King's theology, he says, leads him to see it as far more compatible with the coming reign of God than is capitalism.

What's next for Christians in Cuba? In April, Miguel Díaz-Canel became president, ending nearly 60 years of Castro family rule and shifting leadership to a younger generation born after the revolution. Díaz-Canel has pledged to continue a socialist agenda, but observers, Christians and otherwise, expect him to build on the reforms started by Raúl Castro after he became acting president in 2006. However, the warming Cuba-U.S. relations that began in 2014 under President Obama have become frosty again under Trump, with possible negative effects domestically, and the ongoing U.S. embargo against Cuba contributes to its poverty.

Despite these struggles, many Cubans embrace the concept of "me for the community" rather than "the community for me"—a model, similar to that of the early Jerusalem church, from which Christians elsewhere in the world have much to learn. ■

Reta Halteman Finger's book Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts details the socialist structure of the early Jerusalem church.

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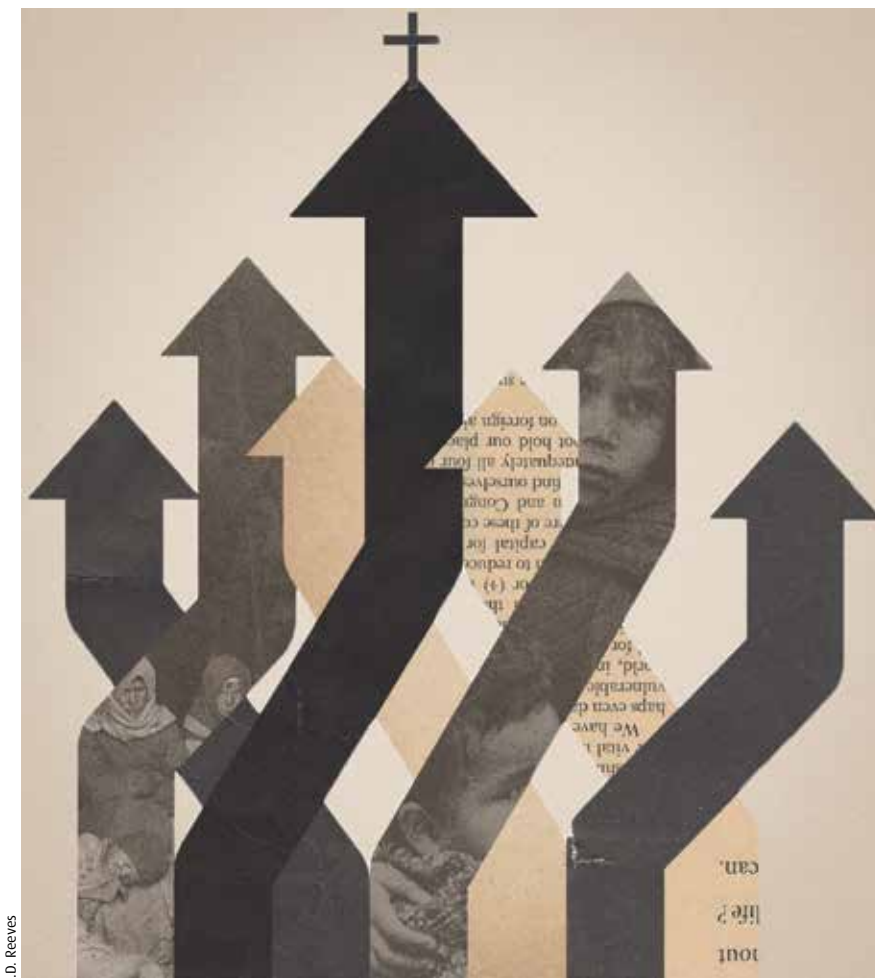
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NEWS



J.D. Reeves

The Sanctuary Movement Goes Global

Germany. Israel. Switzerland. Iceland. Australia. Far from being a U.S.-only phenomenon, “church sanctuary is happening in a surprising number of countries around the world, with mixed success,” reports Derek Burnett. “As an international movement begins to take shape in response to the global refugee crisis, governments are taking notice and, in some cases, striking back.” For an in-depth look at the global sanctuary movement, visit sojo.net/sanctuary.

VIEWS



Why a Southern Church Is Hosting Socialist Meetings

When a local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America asked if they could host a forum on inequality at Calvary United Methodist Church in Durham, N.C., the church leadership was a little surprised. “Even for a church like Calvary, with a history of making bold, progressive stances on LGBTQ rights, anything that resembled ‘politics’ can feel taboo,” admitted pastors Chris Agoranos and John Thornton. But ultimately, they agreed. “The broad consensus was that this issue matters to our neighbors and it ought to matter to us, which seemed as good a reason as any to host the forum at the church.”

On Sundays, Calvary usually has around 30 worshippers, but more than 100 people showed up for the week-night forum. “Churches should match the need for cost-free space for such gatherings with a willingness to show up with a deeper vision of what could be,” wrote Agoranos and Thornton. “A church could be a space of democratic inclusion and encounter. We could be a space where the voices of the oppressed are heard, where their stories call for repentance, and where we commit together to work for the other world begun in Jesus. What is the church community if not a people willing to prophetically live into a world where everyone has as they need? What is church if not a community of freedom?”

Read more at sojo.net/socialist.

QUOTED

“As a white woman, I walk a delicate line between being hurt by misogyny and white supremacy and benefiting from it.”

—Jessica Kantrowitz

on the intersection of sexism and racism
sojo.net/tears

“You’re not going to transform something unless you love it.”

—Grace Lee Boggs (1915–2015),
author, social activist, philosopher, feminist

An inclusive America begins with each of us, as individuals. We have the responsibility to practice spiritual and moral virtues that enable us all to flourish as members of a democratic society.



Photo: Victor Lozano on Unsplash

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The author in the arms of her father, Shin Woung Khang, with her mother and sister in a Chicago suburb in 1973.

Finding 'Voice'

I USED TO BE in the business of making moving and packaging supplies, as well as kindling.

Yes, I was a newspaper reporter. The demise of print news has been alleged for decades, and though I no longer am a newspaper reporter, I still turn to my pile of semi-read news to help me start the occasional fire.

I'm not sure what category book authoring falls under, but it certainly feels riskier than print news. Perhaps that's why it took me so long to drum up the courage and time to put it all down. A newspaper story has a shelf life of about 12 to 48 hours, depend-

ing on the news cycle, and then it can literally be recycled. These days—with Twitter and a thumb-happy resident in a famous white house—it seems the news cycles even faster. Critique of digital news can be brutal, but it's also fast. A book takes much more time to read, never mind the time it takes to write, and one of my fears is that time opens up space for critique.

God created space for the stories of people who were on the margins but critical to *the* story.

church and her followers, I felt it was time to put more of myself out there, be open to criticism, and get people talking about influence, finding "voice," and taking action at a very local, personal level—as well as how to deal with all of the big systems we here at *Sojourners* often like to challenge. I wanted to talk about seeing or hearing something offensive at your child's school and what it's like to not do anything. I wanted to talk about how your relative is sharing racist posts, and how you may choose not to engage with them at the next family dinner. I wanted to talk about why sometimes it's easier to rant by subtweet than it is to walk out on your church.

So I wrote a book. The kid who came to the U.S. at eight months old but didn't learn to speak English until she started kindergarten, the kid who didn't learn about racism until she moved to the white suburbs, the woman who just yesterday in a different white suburb was reminded by a passing motorist that I don't belong, wrote a book hoping to engage readers in taking small, real, tangible steps with family, neighbors, colleagues, and people in the pews—to not only vote, but to talk about why you

vote the way you do. To talk about why that sports team should once and for all retire a racist moniker. To talk about immigrants and immigration with others who may actually be immigrants or have forgotten what rules had to be broken centuries ago.

I wrote a book because I wanted to make sure there are ideas and thoughts in the public from someone who has had to study whiteness and citizenship and choose when, or if, I would raise my voice as a matter of survival—not only for myself but also for the ones I love. I wrote a book about voice because that is part of the story I saw throughout the Bible, the words I hold dearly and daily: how God created space for the stories of people who were on the margins but critical to *the* story.

I wrote a book because I was tired of others saying their words were giving voice to the voiceless. No one is voiceless. I am not voiceless. So I wrote a book. ■

No one is voiceless. I am not voiceless. So I wrote a book. ■

No one is voiceless. I am not voiceless. So I wrote a book. ■

*Kathy Khang is a writer, speaker, and coffee-drinker in the north suburbs of Chicago. She is the author of the forthcoming book *Raise Your Voice*.*



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 **THE SUMMIT**



Parenting in the #MeToo Era

MY OLDEST SON is about to turn 11, which means he is old enough to both recognize and call out the hypocrisies of the adult world. Here are two recent examples:

- While watching an NBA game, he says that adults are always saying that boys shouldn't judge girls by their looks, but what else are you supposed to be doing while cheerleaders are doing their moves? And what do cheerleaders have to do with basketball anyway?

- As my wife and I are singing along to old-school hip-hop in the car, he says that if boys are not supposed to talk about girls' body parts in ways

Brat Pack movies with her then 10-year-old daughter made me think more deeply about the whole dynamic. Ringwald writes about how uncomfortable she was being confronted by the racist and sexist themes in those movies. The horribly racist caricature of Long Duk Dong in *Sixteen Candles*. The under-the-table panties scene in *The Breakfast Club*. The casual ways boys in those movies talked about trading drunk girls as if it were normal.

Something about the presence of her young daughter watching alongside her, asking her to explain this scene or that, made the unjustifiability of it all that much more obvious

to the now middle-aged Ringwald. The subtitle of the piece is "Revisiting the movies of my youth in the age of #MeToo," and it

looks at how it feels to see the racism and sexism of these movies with today's eyes.

That, of course, puts my wife and me in an especially difficult bind.

We live in the #MeToo era. And we, along with most of the other adults in our progressive world, sanctimoniously lecture our kids about things like how to speak to women and the power of words. And then we participate fully in a pop

culture that is awash in images and language that undermines those lessons.

For me, this is most obvious at the fitness center I attend. There I am on the treadmill with all of these fellow parents from the local public school, listening to songs whose lyrics are mostly about men attacking women's bodies like meat, and everybody acts like everything's normal. This is not a dance club at 11 p.m. on a Friday night; it's a fitness club at 11 a.m. on a Saturday morning.

My progressive friends and I love pointing out the thick hypocrisies of Trump-supporting evangelicals. How can they lionize such an obvious misogynist? It's certainly not at the same level, but isn't there more than a little hypocrisy among progressives on the subject of the pop culture we love?

Molly Ringwald's excuse is that the cultural norms of her time were racist and sexist, allowing the writer of those '80s movies, John Hughes, to write things he wouldn't write today, or get away with. But we all live in this more culturally evolved new moment, right? So, what's our excuse? ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about pluralism from his perspective as a Muslim American.

Watching her '80s Brat Pack movies with her 10-year-old forced Molly Ringwald to confront the racism and sexism in those movies.

that make them feel like objects, why is it okay for this guy to sing about liking "big butts"? And why is it okay for us—his parents—to be singing along?

These questions make my wife and me squirm. Generally, we try to face things square on, but on the subject of why we tolerate certain messages in the pop culture that we like, we go mum.

But something in Molly Ringwald's *New Yorker* piece this spring about watching her '80s-era

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Is Nonviolence Naive?



...and other questions about Jesus' most controversial teachings.

by **ANDREW KLAGER** • illustration by **CRAIG FRAZIER**

NONVIOLENCE" EVOKES IMAGES of well-known protests—Gandhi's Salt March, Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington—and conveniently flimsy stereotypes: anarchist hippies, utopian peaceniks, futile protesters. The reality is more complex.

Christian nonviolence adds the further complexity of a shockingly irregular king who was enthroned on a Roman cross. If secular nonviolence seems naive, Christian nonviolence is downright scandalous.

What counts as violence?

Violence is any action that undermines the dignity of another human being, whether direct, structural, or institutional. This can be emotional, psychological, spiritual, or physical abuse; actions that dehumanize the Other; forms of injustice, oppression, or marginalization; and war, genocide, mob violence, and armed insurrection. But violence is not the same as conflict. Conflict provides the space to air grievances and expose injustice; nonviolence entails ending conflict by eroding its causes without succumbing to the allure of violence. Nonviolence requires "the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it, and to make it a link in the chain of a new process," explained Pope Francis.

Does nonviolence mean passive withdrawal from conflict?

Practitioners of nonviolence do not withdraw from conflict; they face it with courage and creativity. A call to alleviate injustice propels practitioners of nonviolence from the sidelines to active solidarity with and participation in the struggles for human dignity. This intentional involvement provides practitioners front-row engagement with injustice, oppression, and exploitation that undercuts any naiveté about the challenges our world faces.



At left, a leader of a neo-Nazi group speaks to a handful of supporters in Georgia.

Is it okay to punch a neo-Nazi?

NEO-NAZIS AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS are marching again. Counterprotesters are opposing and disrupting. Where do Christians stand? In April, *Sojourners* senior associate editor Rose Marie Berger launched this question on social media: Is it okay for a Christian to punch a Nazi? A lively conversation followed, eventually generating nearly 100 replies—and about as many different understandings (and misunderstandings) of Christian nonviolence. Excerpts from the conversation below are edited and used with permission. —**The Editors**

ROSE: Is it okay for a Christian to punch a Nazi? Discuss.

MAUREEN: Last time I checked it is not okay to punch anyone, no matter who you are. Right?

NATE: Yes. Pacifism doesn't work against genocide. You have to have an opponent who can feel shame. Nazis call for the extinction of my people and have proven they are willing to try and carry that out.

ROSE: Is pacifism the same as organized unarmed resistance?

NATE: In my head it has the same results against Nazis. Nazis are my only punching exception.

LARRY: Ask Dietrich Bonhoeffer ...

NATE: Show me where Bonhoeffer succeeded in stopping the Nazis. I'll wait.

LARRY: He didn't, but he didn't resist passively.

KORLA: Choosing to accept death for yourself is substantially different from choosing to accept it for other people, particularly from a position where you're incredibly low on the list of targets. That's cowardly and colonial.

MARIA: Depends on your goals. Pure individual self-defense? Probably. Winning a street battle? Maybe, but not certain. Therapeutic release? Yeah, perhaps. Winning the strategic game of dismantling white supremacy? Probably not, since over time it will discourage participation and weaken the political jujitsu effect.

How do we engage with conflict nonviolently?

When we think about nonviolence, we often picture mass demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, labor strikes, boycotts, and other forms of noncooperation—modes of engagement that burrow into our collective consciousness by their deliberate desire to get our attention.

But the tools of nonviolence also include a broad range of strategic and collaborative initiatives, customized to particular violent conflicts: problem-solving workshops that provide a shared space for grassroots actors, middle-range community leaders, and high-level officials to address real needs and grievances; shared actions between enemy factions to encourage humanization and mutual personal investment in addressing the root causes of violent conflict; disruptive measures that include intercepting arms transfers and cutting off financial resources that fund extremist violence; trauma healing and restorative justice initiatives that promote transformation and reconciliation; and development projects that address physical needs to create the conditions that build relationships and discourage conflict.

All this is just scratching the surface, but these methods insist that violence, which starts a cycle of retribution, can't end it. The cause can't also be the solution.

What makes nonviolence Christian?

Jesus, the author of Christian nonviolence, presents us with a choice between the counterintuitive, life-giving behavior of the kingdom of God—humility, compassion, and unity—and the “natural,” uninspiring logic of empire: violence, exploitation, and competition.

Jesus makes it clear that we can't serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Christian nonviolence begins by pledging allegiance to a king who was put on a Roman cross rather than a throne. It's an upside-down kingdom whose constitution is the Sermon on the Mount and whose manifesto is the Beatitudes.

“You just need to look at what the gospel asks, and what war does,” Dorothy Day observed. “The gospel asks that we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the homeless, visit the prisoner, and perform works of mercy. War does all the opposite. It makes my neighbor hungry, thirsty, homeless, a prisoner, and sick. The gospel asks us to take up our cross. War asks us to lay the cross of suffering on others.” Christian nonviolence relies on the promises of a God who understands that exposing the myth of redemptive violence might mean a life of suffering rather than inflicting suffering on others (1 Peter 2:21; Hebrews 13:12–14).

Is Christian nonviolence about doing what works or doing what's right?

Doing what works and doing what's right often overlap, but Christian nonviolence is quick to smash the idol

of results. “We Westerners pride ourselves on results, effectiveness, and efficiency,” wrote Catholic peace advocate John Dear. “The entire culture of North America is built around the principle of achieving success.” But as Thomas Merton advised peace activist Jim Forest: “Do not depend on the hope of results. ... As you get used to this idea you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself.”

But since Christians are called to do justice, don't we have a responsibility to be as effective as possible?

Yes, definitely! Results shouldn't be idolized as an end in and of themselves. Just as the failure of the cross by the world's standards was followed by the victory of resurrection, there is still a confidence that doing what's right will ultimately be what works.

Embedded in doing what's right is a psychological means of awakening and influencing the true self deep inside our enemies by creating a positive cognitive dissonance. “The purpose of nonviolence,” activist and writer

Jim Douglass observed, is “to persuade the aggressor to recognize in his [or her] victim the humanity they have in common, which when recognized fully makes violence impossible.”

Think about the Sermon on the Mount: Jesus instructs us to reconcile with those who anger us, avoid violently resisting an evildoer, give more than what was stolen, offer the other cheek, go the

second mile, love our enemies, and pray for our persecutors. Though counterintuitive, these commandments are often effective ways to disorient the recipients of our behavior. Instead of inviting retaliation, these actions say: “If you can't acknowledge my dignity, I'll take the responsibility to acknowledge yours.”

That sounds pretty idealistic; does it actually work?

Nonviolent peacebuilders are resolutely pragmatic and science-based, taking and recommending measured responses that consider every conceivable factor, stakeholder, and repercussion. Research by political scientist Erica Chenoweth has shown that, during the 20th century, acts of nonviolent civil resistance were twice as successful in achieving political and socio-economic objectives as acts of violent intervention.

Nonviolence requires creativity rather than laziness,

Practitioners of nonviolence do not withdraw from conflict; they face it with courage and creativity.

Maintaining nonviolent discipline has nothing to do with white privilege and everything to do with strategic efficacy. Also, self-expression and exhibitionism (which is often what punching is about) is hardly the same thing as organizing and winning. I'd probably focus on the latter.

JAMES: Nonviolence is not an adequate form of resistance against forces that advocate violence to achieve their means; nonviolence only makes the resisters easier targets, and martyrdom doesn't accomplish much in the short term. The only way to meet Nazis' evil violence is with righteous violence—but that doesn't mean it's okay just to walk up and punch somebody who's simply advocating reprehensible ideas. Until the Nazis start using their cudgels, it's better just to yell at them.

THEODOSIUS: There is no such thing as righteous violence any more than there is a just war. Both are wrong and against God, and what Satan wants from us.

JAMES: Well, that argument has no force in secular society.

CHUCK: And therefore? For the most part, the story of the cross is weakness and foolishness to secular society, but is the very power of God made manifest.

JASPER: My gut reaction is that Christian pacifism is relatively unconcerned with earthly outcomes. It's a personal decision to participate in the suffering of Christ regardless of how effective that decision is against injustice, because to do so is ultimately to join in a greater sort of victory. Resisting the evil of violence is more important than resisting the evil afoot in the world. Organized unarmed resistance takes its particular form because it believes it will be effective against injustice. Fidelity to Jesus' love command and the biblical precedent of social justice is of primary importance, not necessarily compassion or suffering-with. The actions of those engaged in both may be similar, but motivations differ—not all nonviolent resisters are necessarily pacifists.

THEODOSIUS: So how did the early Christian act about the violence directed at them? Did they not march to their deaths singing praises to their Lord and crying for forgiveness for those about to kill them? Were they fools to do that?

CHUCK: They were not. But without more context, the original question is nigh impossible to answer. I generally think of it like this: Striking another is always sinful, but in some cases it might be the least sinful thing to do. But I'm thinking that we must remind ourselves of our own brokenness, which causes us often to rightly read the context.

DEBBIE: In self-defense or defense of another: Yes!

THEODOSIUS: No. You stand in the way and take what is being directed at the other person.

JOEY: Considering it from a position of nonviolence, I don't even think it's fair to call such acts "violence" when you consider the vast scope of violence of the dominant systems of oppression. Punching a Nazi does extremely little harm to that Nazi compared to the harm done by the ideologies they espouse. Therefore, even calling those acts "violence" is spitting in the face of people oppressed by white supremacy and patriarchy.

MARC: That's just wrong, because the definition of the term is lost in the application. You can argue for punching Nazis, but not as nonviolence. It makes no sense. Nonviolence is about the means as ends, by definition.

JACKIE: Are you punching them while they are in the act of doing something awful? Or simply because they are a Nazi? I think that matters.

RYAN: If your right fist causes you to sin, cut it off. Then throw it at the Nazi. Then give them a left hook.

MARK: I'm personally more concerned with whether or not it is *helpful* to punch a Nazi at this point, not whether or not it is right or okay. I think the assumption that a Nazi-punch is effective or productive needs to be interrogated. Often it seems like a machismo release rather than tactically valuable, and the conversation gets stuck on the morality of violence vs. nonviolence rather than on tactical considerations. Personally, I don't think it is usually all that helpful. I think there are probably better tactics. In terms of morality, I don't get upset if some Nazi gets clocked. That's not the sort of violence that worries me. At the same time, I can't imagine personally punching Nazis in any way that actually benefits my development as a whole person.

MARCIA: It's okay to restrain them if they are punching someone else, to blockade them if they are intent on evil, to protest them when they rally, and to pray for their conversion at all times. It is even okay to heal them and bind their wounds when they are punched by someone else (I'm thinking of Charlottesville). But if we punch a Nazi, then they win. Their gospel is violence, and when we embrace their example, then we abandon the nonviolent gospel of Jesus Christ, who tells us to love not just our neighbor but our enemies as well. Or, as Dorothy Day put it, "Love is the only solution."

KORLA: So yes, their gospel is violence. But it is not an abstract violence. It is violence with quantifiable goals. If punching a Nazi interrupts them in the pursuit of those goals, that doesn't mean they win.

wisdom rather than impulsiveness, maturity rather than bravado, courage rather than fear. Consider the Otpor ("resistance") Movement in Serbia, that used street theater and other nonviolent tactics to overthrow Slobodan Milošević in October 2000. Or the Catholic bishops in South Sudan who invited armed factions, opposition leaders, and government agents to dialogue in a neutral forum.

Or CoMadres, the committee of mothers and relatives of those incarcerated during El Salvador's civil war that spread pamphlets and occupied a government building to pressure the Salvadoran government to release its political prisoners. Or

Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, a movement whose tactics included a sex strike and led to the end of the second Liberian civil war in 2003 and the election of the country's first female head of state. Even the Nazis gave in to the women of the Rosenstrasse protest whose tactics secured the release of their Jewish husbands and loved ones who they feared were about to be sent to death camps.

Despite these examples, we're still far too ready to cheer on knee-jerk violent means to achieving goals. "People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work' they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries," said historian Theodore Roszak.

What about when limited use of violence could save lives?

"War is impatience," wrote theologian Stanley Hauerwas. Rather than indulge in quick solutions that produce unstable results, Christian nonviolence takes a long-term approach to the transformation of violent conflict. The so-called "collateral damage" of military munitions—the unintended victims—are the same people with whom practitioners of nonviolence engage to build peace and seek reconciliation. Whereas military interventions leave no room for human transformation, Christian nonviolence agrees with the one who preached that none of God's creation is beyond the recreation of the Creator.

Conflict transformation recognizes that the type of cycle we want depends on the type of fuel we use to propel it. Even if violence seems to "work"—that is, stop more violence with less violence, or prevent a larger body count with a smaller body count—this is always temporary. Violence cannot disrupt a cycle of violence.

Instead, we aim to replace the cycle of violence with a cycle of *nonviolence*. Acting nonviolently disrupts the cycle of violence. "Despite recent scholarship demonstrating the greater effectiveness of nonviolent

Jesus refused to confront evil in the world using evil methods.

resistance,” wrote political scientist Molly Wallace, “when faced with a brutal or blatantly unjust opponent, many people are inclined to believe that only violence will bring about needed change or be able to protect and defend one’s community.” Antifa groups, who do not rule out engaging in violent confrontations to fight fascism, are a contemporary example of this logic—and its counterproductive effects. Not only does the presence of a “violent flank” in a nonviolent movement “provide necessary or further justification for government security forces to fire on protesters,” explained Wallace, but it further enflames the energy of “non-state groups, including neo-Nazis and white supremacists, mobilizing more recruits and ultimately increasing the vulnerability of anti-racist and anti-fascist activists and the marginalized and targeted communities whom they wish to defend.”

Nonviolence not only removes opponents’ incentive, it initiates a new cycle of love, hope, compassion, selflessness, mercy, empathy, and mutual altruism that renders violence incomprehensible and unattractive.

If Christian nonviolence leads to suffering, what hope can it give to those who are already suffering?

By choosing to accept suffering (1 Peter 2:21) rather than multiply the suffering of others, we follow the example of Jesus and refuse to fuel the cycle of violence. “We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering,” said Martin Luther King Jr. “We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you.”

Jesus refused to use evil methods to confront evil in the world. He had the option of calling on 12 legions of angels or allowing Peter to feebly hack at the Roman soldiers, but Jesus subverted the Zealots’ methods of violent insurrection—and the exclusivist “us vs. them” narrative on which it depended. Jesus also rejected the idea of a military messiah who would crush the brutal oppression of the Roman Empire. Instead, Jesus exem-

plified creative nonviolent conflict resolution (as he did when he prevented the stoning of the adulteress in John 8:1-11) and forgiveness (as he did toward his own killers as he hung on the cross in Luke 23:34) en route to conquering through his resurrection that which violence produces, death.

But this does not mean we seek out suffering as a goal. Suffering is the by-product of a fallen, oppressive, violent world; when we choose to accept suffering, we participate in a form of dramatized truth-telling that

Christian non-violence is hard; that’s why we need practice.

RANDALL: In self-defense, it is sometimes necessary to be proactive before a threat grows to the capacity to do you, your family, your community, or your nation harm. Therefore, although I am not a big fan of the antifa movement, I must admit that they have done a remarkable job at discouraging, bringing attention to, and making fools of Nazis and their rallies.

If our government fails to take the steps necessary to stop Nazi terrorism in the United States, fails to protect victims and targets of fascist “alt-right” attacks, the least people can do is punch them in the face and expose them as the racist cowards they are. However, actions must be well calculated to avoid escalation, and most of the emphasis needs to be on massive nonviolent direct action, including the strategy of identifying and exposing Nazis and other members of racist, nationalist militias.

NATE: Nazis. The people who tried to exterminate my people. Nazis should be punched. I’m not for violence in many other circumstances. But history has taught violence is the only defense against specifically Nazis.

THEODOSIUS: God creates all of us as true icons of Christ. That means that the person you would strike out at is in fact Christ himself. Now, stop your ego and discover the real truth of how others faced and fought the Nazis. Not by guns, but rather by prayer. And by acting as Christ.

SUSAN: I am increasingly compelled to consider how much my non-violence values are a luxury of my white privilege.

DIANE: No. Would Jesus punch a Nazi? There are other ways to fight evil. Self-defense would allow a person to punch another, but that doesn’t really have anything to do with who the two people are.

KATE: I taught a class on just war theory and pacifism today and am finding this to be a fascinating thread. One interesting question is about the role of nonviolence in solidarity. Measuring U.S. (civilian) solidarity with the Sandinistas, for example, against solidarity with the second intifada. When, where, and why is nonviolence a prerequisite for solidarity, and when, where, and why is it not?

BILL: Was World War II a “just war”? Does nonviolent resistance only work against the “civilized” British or Americans, but not against Nazis? It’s only our failure to imagine and practice new nonviolent tactics in such situations that makes this question serious.

DAVID: It brings to mind the old question, “What would Jesus do?” Would Jesus punch a Nazi? If he accepted being tortured and executed without violent resistance, what would compel him to react differently to 20th and 21st century oppressors?

PHIL: The correct question is, “Is it okay for a Christian to do nothing toward a Nazi?” This is an astronomically more important question. ■



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exposes violence—much like the cross. Though we may choose to accept suffering in the interim, non-violence is ultimately about undermining violence, relieving us of our own suffering that the violence of others engenders.

This also means we cannot *prescribe* this suffering for others. Participation in nonviolent acceptance of suffering is a personal and often difficult choice that isn't applicable in all circumstances, least of all in situations of domestic and sexual abuse that disproportionately affect women, even more so women of color.

"We must measure Christian ethics by the extent to which its rhetoric on violence is applicable to the circumstances of women's lives," wrote Christian ethicist Traci West. "This is the proper test of the viability and adequacy of its moral prescriptions." West reframed nonviolent acceptance of suffering not as a masochistic approval of abuse but as a form of *resistance* against the violence that engenders this suffering.

There is an important difference between the suffering of Christ on the cross and situations of abuse: The former was a *voluntary* means of exposing collective humanity's violence of such intensity that it actually killed God (John 10:18); the latter is *involuntary*, trapping the victim in a private cycle that enables injustice by keeping it hidden in a cloak of humiliation and shame. This is not nonviolence. Nonviolence is, according to West, part of "an ethic of resisting violence against women" through various means that subvert systems of dominance—especially publicly as a way to de-normalize this abuse and offer solidarity and courage to those facing abuse.

This all sounds ... hard.

Christian nonviolence *is* hard; that's why we need practice. We cultivate nonviolence *not* as a strategy to dust off in urgent circumstances or international crises, but as a way of life. Nonviolence is an antidote to the violence that infects our minds and souls. We need to practice it in everyday decisions, including interior and interpersonal struggles, our interactions with the environment, and our personal economic choices.

In all these actions, we try to recognize the image of God—the one who gives life and *is* life—in all human beings, whether we think they're deserving of this or not. The word "deserve" does not belong in the vocabulary of a practitioner of nonviolence. Nonviolence undercuts the "us vs. them" dichotomy and refuses to distinguish between the culpable and the innocent; there are only those who are in need of more transformation, restoration, and healing than are others.

Rather than *not* violence and *not* death, the positive expression of Christian nonviolence is the percolation of life that bubbles up among the many expressions of violence in our world so that death is eventually overwhelmed. And this sums up the entire Christian vocation: participating in life as a way to conquer death. This is Christian nonviolence. ■

Andrew Klager, who lives in British Columbia, Canada, is director of the Institute for Religion, Peace, and Justice at St. Stephen's University.

Charlottesville, the Summer After

THERE IS NOTHING new under the sun, as the author of Ecclesiastes reminds us. In this, theologian Elsa Tamez said, we can “find solidarity in our discontent.”

I visited Charlottesville in May, nearly a year after the “summer of hate.” I heard from young Christians who had been on the frontlines at Robert E. Lee Park (now called Emancipation Park). I stood in the presence of their discontent, listening and witnessing to the ongoing, traumatizing effects of last summer’s “fascist lollapalooza,” as one University of Virginia professor put it.

Still reckoning with the memory of Aug. 12, one leader in his 20s shared how he had tried to be a nonviolent defender amid multiple “armed actors,” including the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, anti-fascists, and police. By the end of that day, two state troopers were dead, one woman was murdered, dozens were injured, and the whole community was emotionally, spiritually wounded.

In small towns such as Charlottesville and more recently

who follow them” (1:11). There is a loss of historical memory. “Collective amnesia means the death of a people,” wrote Tamez.

But to remember requires storytellers who will carry the stories and remember the details. At this year’s Freedom and Liberation Day gathering in Charlottesville, the community gathered to mark the day 153 years ago when Union troops marched into the city and liberated more than half the population. In remarks at the event,

Jalane Schmidt, who teaches religious studies at the University of Virginia, provided context for the Lee and Stonewall Jackson statues that were the frontlines last summer.

“Neither of those Confederate generals ever came to Charlottesville, except Stonewall Jackson, who came through in a coffin on the way to his burial in Lexington,” Schmidt said. “Yet these monuments and the decades of Lost Cause [pro-Confederate] textbooks ... have manufactured mistaken memories that have quashed our knowledge of our own

local history.” Legend focuses on Jackson as an unstoppable war hero. History brings us back to the fact that the brilliant military tactician for a despicable cause was brought down by friendly fire, then succumbed to pneumonia a week later.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that everything has a season. We in no way reconcile ourselves to the anti-human absurdities of the present. We learn how our present-day battles fit in history. We recall and retell the stories that keep us strong.

“Resist wisely in the face



At right, the covered statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Va., last August. The statue was ordered uncovered in February.

of absurdity,” wrote Tamez. This is the most important message in Ecclesiastes—“how to survive with dignity in a dehumanizing and annihilating reality.”

In Charlottesville, there was a man with beautiful tattoos. On his arms were drawn long-feathered quetzal birds flexed for flight and a jade-colored double-headed serpent. The ancient history of Tenochtitlán was alive on him.

In Charlottesville, there were brave young leaders who have reclaimed an abandoned church. They’re learning the stories of the founding circuit-rider pastor and the first parishioners who sat in its pews. Their worship banners are origami peace cranes and Black Lives Matter posters. Outside, they’ve planted a garden.

In Charlottesville, there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to plant and a time to uproot. ■

Rose Marie Berger, a Sojourners senior associate editor, is a Catholic peace activist and poet.



“Resist wisely in the face of absurdity.”

—Elsa Tamez

Coweta County, Ga., fascists are organizing cadres of white supremacists, neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, and European identity movements. They are terrorizing small towns in America, especially those with liberal arts colleges. They are intentionally setting up young people in ideological cage fights and goading them to kill each other.

A CENTRAL PROBLEM for the writer of Ecclesiastes is that “no one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those



Scott Griessel

CAIR California

by DA'SHAWN MOSLEY

Showing Up

These five leaders are working to make our world a more just and peaceful place.

Many people talk about the injustices in the world but do nothing to rectify them. This can't be said about the following five leaders—pastors, activists, lawyers, businesspeople, and artists—who Sojourners will recognize as “movement honorees” at the June 13-15 Summit 2018. These innovators are doing what Jesus did: taking God's vision of the world and spurring others toward that ideal.



Eze Amos

Rev. Brittany Caine-Conley

"It's about building a relationship and showing up."

Long before Rev. Brittany Caine-Conley entered the nation's gaze in her work to dismantle white supremacy in Charlottesville, Va., her love for social justice began on a small scale. When Caine-Conley was a child, she watched *Rugrats*, the animated series on Nickelodeon about toddlers gone rogue. Sometimes, though, she couldn't make it through episodes of the show due to her anger that the character Angelica "was so mean to the other babies and no one was doing anything about it."

"I learned pretty early about myself," Caine-Conley told *Sojourners*, "that the concepts of justice and righteousness were really important concepts to me."

Cue Aug. 12, 2017. While much of the nation watched from afar the racially charged violence in Charlottesville, Caine-Conley encountered the physical threats in person as she protested the white nationalist rally in her city. Caine-Conley and other protesters were shoved by supporters of the Unite the Right rally. And the car that a Nazi sympathizer plowed—apparently on purpose—into a crowd of protesters, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer, also injured an affiliate of Congregate Charlottesville, the local faith-based social justice network Caine-Conley, United Church of Christ minister, helped organize.

"It was the most horrible thing I've ever experienced," Caine-Conley said to *Vox* about seeing the wounded, who were lying in the street in the car's wake.

And yet Caine-Conley believes it is her duty to be wherever tragedies like this happen—to put herself in harm's way. "As a white faith leader," Caine-Conley told *Rolling Stone*, "I feel it is my duty to absorb violence, so that black and brown bodies don't have to. Black and brown bodies have been absorbing violence since as long as this country has been occupied by white imperialism."

Caine-Conley's activism—Congregate Charlottesville organized nonviolent direct action training in preparation to protest the Unite the Right rally—has garnered national attention, with her name appearing in high-profile publications such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Dealing with the spotlight has been weird, she told *Sojourners*, but she's grateful for a larger platform from which she can direct attention to the racism in Charlottesville and the work that must be done to eradicate it. "Activists of color here in Charlottesville have been doing this work a long time," Caine-Conley acknowledges, but she believes it's white people's responsibility to undo the racism they have benefitted from.

"What I did last summer, and what others did with me, is something that other people can do," said Caine-Conley. "It's really about building a relationship and showing up." ■

Kesha Cash

"There are still lots of people out here who want society to be better."

Communities of color are often overlooked in the financial world, their interests often ignored and their desire for positive economic impact for their neighborhoods denied. But Kesha Cash is working to change that. A former analyst at Merrill Lynch and a graduate of Columbia University's business school, Cash now helps entrepreneurs who may have been overlooked by funders due to their identities by providing them with the means to start their dream businesses. Cash supports these initiatives

Columbia Business School



first began in Los Angeles when she met a fashion designer who was selling his creations—dresses he had sewn by hand—at a local flea market. "He worked at the flea market on the weekends," said Cash, "and then, the rest of the week, sold items out of his garage at his home." She was struck by the quality of his work and his story of struggling to succeed as a fashion designer, and she became committed to using her business knowledge to secure him funding to open a store.

This is just one of numerous success stories that Cash has helped facilitate, but what Cash may be most proud of is the nature of the people she has gathered behind the scenes to work on the Impact America Fund and their commitment to the work. She says the success stories wouldn't be possible without them.

"We have a fantastic network of people who we can call on at any moment in time, and they respond," said Cash.

"With so many things going on in the world, and turbulent times, I think, 'No, there are still a large number of people out here who want society to be better.'" And Kesha Cash is glad to be among them. ■

Zahra Billoo

"I attempt to create space and amplify the concerns of those who are being silenced."

It's possible that President Trump knows who Zahra Billoo is, since Billoo has filed suit against the president—but not guaranteed, since Trump has been a defendant in federal court 72 times since 2000.

Billoo, an attorney and executive director of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), sued Trump, the Homeland Security secretary, the State Department, and the director of National Intelligence over Trump's immigration order, which restricted for 90 days travel to the U.S. by citizens of seven countries with mostly Muslim populations.

Billoo's lawsuit, filed with several other American Muslims, states



Jason Halberg

Jeanette Vizguerra

"Our faith tells us to do what's moral, what's right."

Throughout Jeanette Vizguerra's 86 days in sanctuary, often with three of her four children by her side, the Virgin of Guadalupe was constantly on her mind. "I always think about the Virgin of Guadalupe," Vizguerra told *Sojourners*. "She and God are always in my thoughts as I go through all these challenges."

It was Vizguerra's faith that sustained her during her time living in First Unitarian and First Baptist churches in Denver—a refuge from the U.S. government's threat of deportation, until the government granted her a two-year stay of removal last year. Vizguerra says it has also been her faith that has fueled her activism, with more than 21 years of work as a leader in Colorado for the cause of immigrant and worker rights. She also worked as a janitor and started a company.

It's brave for an undocumented immigrant to be public in the way that Vizguerra has been, in constant danger of being seized from her children and sent back to Mexico. But Vizguerra has taken the risk, even during President Trump's time in office, sharing not just her story but also the struggles of others. In doing so, she garnered national attention, with *Time* magazine naming her one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2017 and Emmy-winning actress America Ferrera—a daughter of immigrants—writing about her for the issue.

"I always want to include the stories of others who have not been highlighted," said Vizguerra, "people who the media is not rushing to get to."

Vizguerra admits that being a face of a movement is strenuous, but she feels responsible for her community—and for all immigrants—to be adequately represented to the world, so that people who don't know the immigrant struggle can be educated.

"What I always tell congregations, whenever I visit churches," said Vizguerra, "is that our faith tells us to do what's moral, what's right—to reflect if we're doing what's right for our brothers and sisters."

"This is not a crime," wrote Ferrera, about Vizguerra's life in the U.S. "This is the American Dream." ■



Jake Holschuh

Rev. Julian DeShazier

"My faith is really the only thing that doesn't waver in the midst of all this nonsense."

The 2016 U.S. presidential election wasn't the start of Rev. Julian DeShazier's awareness of—and grief over—current injustices in a nation built on an ideal of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

"I'm a black man living on Chicago's South Side," DeShazier told *Sojourners*. "My life and faith were tested long before 2016." As the pastor of University Church based in a city known for its gun violence, DeShazier is trying to rewrite Chicago's murder narrative into a story of peace and care. He was a prime mover behind the South Side's efforts to have its own Level One adult trauma center—so that gunshot victims wouldn't have to be taken across the city for care—and in September 2016, the requests were finally fulfilled. In April 2016, DeShazier's church provided sanctuary to an undocumented father given, by the U.S. government, an order to leave the country.

In November 2015, under the name J.Kwest, DeShazier released a rap album titled *Lemonade*—months before another artist you may have heard of released her

project of the same name. And in July 2015, DeShazier shared an Emmy Award from the local chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for a short film titled "Strange Fruit."

In short, DeShazier has been a busy man. And in the face of a Trump presidency, it doesn't seem as if he plans to stop. In December, he and several others cut the ribbon for the opening of the trauma center, and in April he hosted the A.C.T. to End Racism rally in Washington, D.C.

"I don't really believe in a faith that is only for 'good times' or 'when the party I voted for is in control,'" said DeShazier. "I was taught that I belong to God, am beloved, and possess great power and responsibility. My faith is really the only thing that doesn't waver in the midst of all this nonsense."

What DeShazier really wonders is how those who "hold onto this destructive and often loveless status quo" can also hold onto their faith. ■



Things Not See Radio

that the "Muslim Exclusion Order" issued by President Trump "imposes upon Islam ... the stigma of government disfavor."

"What else will this administration do," Billoo wondered aloud, in conversation with *Sojourners*, "to target people who pray differently than their friends do?"

Billoo has made it her mission to help stop whatever injustices Trump and others plan next against her fellow American Muslims. In the past few years, Billoo has been arrested while protesting at Speaker Paul Ryan's office for immigration reform; successfully sued the clothing company Abercrombie & Fitch, which fired a Muslim woman who wouldn't remove her hijab; appeared on MSNBC and at the 2017 Women's March in Washington, D.C.; and much more.

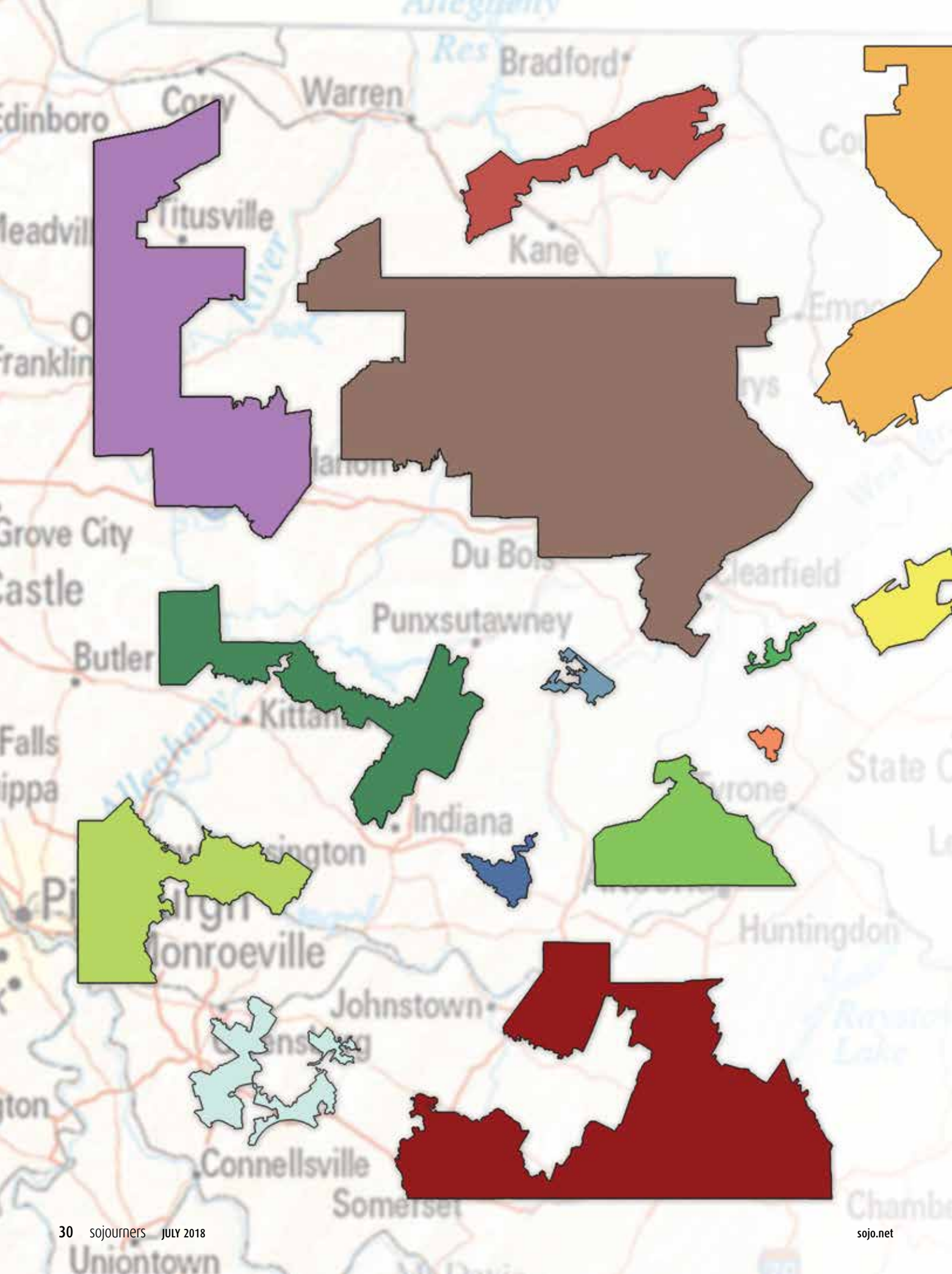
But Billoo doesn't just focus on Muslim rights. Intensely aware of intersectionality, she speaks on the basis that bias against one group is often inextricably linked to bias of

another group. "We try really hard," said Billoo about CAIR, "to name the fact that this country was built on the genocide of Native Americans and the slave trade—and that we didn't end slavery but just moved it from the fields to the prison industrial complex—because, though in this moment everyone is talking about Trump, individually, but also as communities, we've experienced racism and oppression for generations."

Billoo is committed to using her privilege to further causes that don't directly affect her.

"I attempt to create space and amplify the concerns of those who are being silenced," she said. "I work to protect myself and my family, and it would be dishonest for me to deny that. But beyond that, my hope and my prayer is that my faith also drives my service for others." ■

Da'Shawn Mosley is assistant editor of Sojourners magazine.





PUSHING The Boundaries

Carol Kuniholm is an evangelical on a mission to end partisan gerrymandering in Pennsylvania • by ELIZABETH EVANS

In the fight against gerrymandered electoral districts in Pennsylvania, Carol Kuniholm is a rock star.

A former English professor and youth pastor, Kuniholm now spends much of her time traveling the Keystone State, explaining to hundreds of listeners how politicians have deliberately redrawn Pennsylvania's voting districts to favor their own party. Using charts and graphs, Kuniholm shows, in lucid detail, how the disfigured districts chill democracy. "Democracy means voters choose their politicians," explains the website of Fair Districts PA, an anti-gerrymandering organization Kuniholm co-founded in 2016. "Current Pennsylvania law lets politicians choose their voters."

Plain-spoken and precise, Kuniholm hasn't changed her demeanor since taking charge of the state movement, though she did make one concession to her newfound fame: "I bought a suit," she confesses.

On Sundays, she and her husband, Whitney, can be found in the pews of the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan in the Philadelphia suburbs, or praying with parishioners near the front (the writer also attends that congregation). Kuniholm grew up attending a Christian Missionary Alliance church, went to a Wesleyan college, and later was involved with Evangelicals for Social Action. By her own description, Kuniholm considers herself "strongly



Background: The shapes of Pennsylvania's gerrymandered congressional districts before being redrawn by the state supreme court.

The old gerrymandered map of Pennsylvania, top, and the new court-ordered map.



Carol Kuniholm leads a rally inside the Pennsylvania state capitol in Harrisburg.

within the historic evangelical tradition.”

All in all, in the nonstop theater of the Pennsylvania political arena—sometimes more barroom brawl than government by the people—Kuniholm is an unlikely addition.

“The cornerstone of corruption”

This summer, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to deliver its decision on two cases of partisan gerrymandering: one against Republican redistricting in Wisconsin, the other against Democratic redistricting in Maryland. But manipulating voting districts by drawing boundaries that favor one party over the other goes back to Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry, who, in 1812, employed the strategy to create his own misshapen district. (Critics thought Gerry’s oddly shaped district resembled a salamander and nicknamed it “the Gerry-mander.”)

In 1965, the Voting Rights Act ended the then-common practice of intentionally dividing neighborhoods where minorities live across several voting districts to weaken their voting power. But while racial gerrymandering is prohibited, partisan gerrymandering—for which there is no federal limit—often achieves the same effect. “Particularly in the South, where racial identity and partisan identity frequently overlap, partisan gerrymandering is a way of reducing the voice of minority constituencies,” said Tom Wolf, counsel with the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Though partisans looking for an advantage can skew district maps anywhere, Pennsylvania, a traditional battleground state, is a standout. According to a 2017

report by researchers at the Brennan Center, Pennsylvania joined North Carolina and Michigan as the states whose voting districts showed the most “extreme levels of partisan bias.” In Pennsylvania, this has given Republicans an ongoing advantage in elections, resulting in a share of seats out of sync with their numbers. “Pennsylvania sends too many Republicans to Washington,” said *Philadelphia Inquirer* staff writer Jonathan Lai after analyzing data from the Brennan Center and the Gerrymandering Project at Princeton University. “That’s not a partisan attack. That’s just math.”

“This is the cornerstone of corruption in Pennsylvania, and if you could change this, you would change Pennsylvania politics,” a group of retired district attorneys told Kuniholm when she first began working against gerrymandering.

Stop pondering, get busy

Though Kuniholm never envisioned herself getting involved with politics, her awareness of inequality began in childhood. Raised with her three siblings by her hard-working grandmother in the wealthy suburbs of New York City, Kuniholm recalled the generosity of teachers who often conjured up an extra ticket for a class trip. And she knew what it was like to benefit from government support: “We had social workers and food stamps, and I think that was a good investment,” said Kuniholm. “When people make comments about people who need help, I think, ‘You could need help. How dare you assume that people who need help are somehow less than you or lazy? Don’t assume you are a better person.’”

Later, as a youth pastor, Kuniholm

Those formerly on the



began building relationships with families in Kensington, an economically struggling neighborhood where her suburban church had a partnership. Over time, she saw how inadequate housing and underfunded schools kept the neighborhood locked in poverty. But unlike her own experience, government institutions—such as the educational and justice systems—failed to provide meaningful support for the families in Kensington.

Kuniholm tried to supply some of that missing support: She got to know a single mother and her kids, offering educational games for the children, sleepovers at the Kuniholm residence, and encouragement for the mother as she worked on her GED. But Kuniholm realized volunteering wasn’t going to do much good without altering the political calculus. “Kids need schools that function,” she explained, especially kids who may have language barriers, lag in reading skills, or have emotional difficulties. Kuniholm discovered that Pennsylvania has among the most inequitable school funding in the country—something unlikely to change with a state legislature she found to be systemically unresponsive to either the needs or the opinions of their constituents.

When her parish job ended, Kuniholm wanted to help, but she was unsure how to be most effective. She joined a group of like-minded locals trying to map out the root causes of economic injustice in the shadow of the Occupy Wall Street movement. “The more we talked, the more I thought things were really inequitable, and I didn’t know how to fix them,” she explained. Eventually, she decided she needed to do more than sip coffee and ponder. “We’re not doing things, and I prefer to do things.”

Kuniholm searched for a nonpartisan, civically engaged organization and wound up at a local meeting of the League of Women Voters, where she later became the state election reform specialist. As she began to understand the political landscape more fully, she said, she realized that without a gerrymandering fix, solving the other inequities that had long troubled her might not be possible.

God and gerrymandering

Since then, Kuniholm has pursued the goal of ending gerrymandering in Pennsylvania politics with remarkable, nonpartisan tenacity.

outside are asking, sometimes demanding, a place at the table.



When she's not testifying before a state senate hearing in Harrisburg or meeting with a member of the media, Kuniholm spends a lot of her time driving alone across Pennsylvania to address audiences gathered in school auditoriums and churches, staying in the homes of friends and supporters. Though Kuniholm doesn't attend all the meetings for Fair Districts PA, the group has logged at least 340 gatherings across the state, with more than 18,000 people showing up.

At these meetings, Kuniholm provides examples of volunteers who share resolutions in municipalities across the state, make appointments with their legislators, start petition drives, and begin showing up at local school board meetings and other government functions. Then she challenges her audience to consider how they can help. And it works: As she crosses the state, she constantly runs into volunteers who were inspired to get involved after they heard her speak.

"Part of the reason for her success, and for ours, is that she doesn't take 'no' or 'it's impossible' for an answer," said Patrick Beaty, a retired lawyer who is helping Fair Districts PA implement a legislative strategy. "If you are a person who has been involved in other legislative issues, you might be cynical or discouraged. Her optimism and can-do attitude is just what we need at this time."

Another reason for Kuniholm's perseverance? Her faith. In a winter presentation at her home congregation titled "Justice and Gerrymandering: Faith Perspectives on Redistricting Reform," Kuniholm shared scripture passages—Isaiah 1:7, Micah 6:8, and Amos 5:24—that have shaped her work on behalf of those on the margins, whether they are challenged by poverty, educational inequality, or a system she believes is slanted to favor whatever political party is in power.

"For me this is an issue of loving your neighbor," Kuniholm later explained. While buying a school uniform for someone who can't afford it or inviting them to your house for a long weekend is a start, Kuniholm said that "at a certain point loving my neighbor has to go beyond practical demonstrations. We need to look at the policies that hold them in place."

Working collaboratively with the advocacy arm of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Kuniholm has prepared a video and a study guide for churches and other faith communities that want to delve further into the issue from a faith perspective. The Fair Districts PA initiative has also been endorsed by denominations and religious organizations across the state.

Demanding a place

Earlier this year, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the congressional maps drawn in 2011 were partisan and unfair to voters and ordered a new map to be drawn by a Stanford Law School professor who has drawn court-adjudicated district maps in other places. Though Republican leaders in the Pennsylvania legislature appealed all

Maps created by independent commissions, courts, or split-party state governments showed significantly less bias.

the way to the Supreme Court, the new maps remain in place.

But according to Kuniholm, it's "not a permanent solution." Currently, the districts are redrawn by legislators every 10 years to account for changes in the population; without further laws against gerrymandering, the next time districts are drawn, they will be drawn by the same manipulative process. For Kuniholm, a longer-term fix would involve putting redistricting of congressional and legislative boundaries in the hands of a citizen commission rather than that of lawmakers. In its 2017 study, researchers at the Brennan Center found that maps created by independent commissions, courts, or split-party state governments showed significantly less bias. A citizen commission could reconfigure both the Pennsylvania legislative maps and the congressional boundaries.

This strategy—using an independent commission to draw electoral districts—has been proposed in several bills currently being debated by Pennsylvania legislators. Though the future of these bills is uncertain, Fair Districts PA has been instrumental in

rallying citizens to support the legislation, says state Rep. Steve Samuelson, a Lehigh Valley lawmaker who has been working on redistricting reform for almost two decades. "We once again have tremendous support," said Samuelson, adding that 109 state representatives have now signed on in support of the move. "I'm sure that many of my colleagues have signed on to the bill because local citizens have sat down with them and educated them. Public support has had a tremendous effect on the legislation."

Philadelphia-based Keith Forsyth, a retired engineer who volunteers as a county coordinator for Fair Districts PA, sees the anti-gerrymandering effort as one that is potentially winnable. A longtime political progressive, Forsyth firmly believes that grassroots organizing is a more effective route to change than others, including lobbying.

So does Kuniholm. "While paid lobbyists have a great deal of influence in Harrisburg, at the end of the day these legislators have to go home and be re-elected in their own districts," she explained.

There are times when her schedule feels completely out of control, admits Kuniholm, but it's worth it. "I feel sacrificially called to this," she said. "It's sacrificial work for everyone involved." And she credits the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters volunteers who assisted her at the beginning and the wide network of citizens who have shown up at meetings and asked how they can get involved with Fair Districts.

In the meantime, this citizen-activist is inspired by the many ways in which those formerly on the outside are asking, sometimes demanding, a place at the table. Though political insiders have long assumed that they have the right to keep others out, Kuniholm believes "everything has made it clear that women, people of color, and others are going to have their say. I know it troubles them, but it has to change—and it will change. These wonderful people want to see it happen." ■

Elizabeth Evans is a freelance religion writer and columnist who lives in the exurbs of Philadelphia.

'An Existential

by **MAE ELISE CANNON**
and **ANDREW WICKERSHAM**

EVANGELICALS IN THE United States and Christians in the Middle East had vastly differing responses to President Trump's actions on Jerusalem that sparked the explosion of violence this spring on Gaza's border with Israel.

In the United States, 53 percent of evangelicals supported the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, according to a Brookings Institute poll, and it was greeted with unadulterated joy by prominent leaders of the Religious Right. A wide range of church leaders in the Middle East were decidedly less positive about Trump's actions, pointing to the potential threat not only to peace in the region but also to the very presence of Christians in the Holy Land.



Reuters photos

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence hold the proclamation recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Palestinians also claim Jerusalem as their capital. Most countries have followed the lead of the U.N. in locating their embassies in Tel Aviv.



Threat'

Trump's actions on Jerusalem not only fueled an explosion of violence at the Gaza border, they also create a clear and present danger to Christians in the Holy Land.



Palestinians at the Gaza-Israel border react to tear gas dropped by Israeli drones during a protest of the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem.



Conservative Christian pastors Robert Jeffress, left, and John Hagee lead prayers at the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem.

How could an action so many U.S. Christians supported elicit such opposition from Christians across the denominational landscape of the Middle East?

There are, of course, deep divides within Christianity about the place of the Holy Land and role of the Jewish people in eschatology that in part explain the divergent reactions, but there are pragmatic reasons as well for why Middle Eastern Christians would oppose the Trump administration's actions on Jerusalem. The U.S. government's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel—absent a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians—will certainly threaten the Christian presence in the city and increase the risk of violence, according to church leaders there, owing to the unilateral nature of the decision.

Supporters of U.S. recognition of Jerusalem might ask how this seemingly symbolic act could harm Christians (or anyone, for that matter). The Trump administration, after all, denies that the recognition of Jerusalem will have any detrimental impact on the peace process. They argue that Jerusalem has served as the physical location of Israel's government since 1950; it makes no sense, they say, to deny the reality that the city is "in fact" Israel's capital.

The fact of the matter is that Jerusalem's status is disputed. Israel's definition of the municipal limits of the city differs from those recognized by the international community. Even the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Pope Francis have condemned the Trump administration's position regarding Jerusalem.

America's most prominent Christian Zionist politician

Since the beginning of his career in politics, Vice President Mike Pence has made it clear to his constituents that his Christian faith informs his political views, including his positions on U.S. foreign policy. In a now-infamous 2002 interview with *Congressional Quarterly*, while Pence was serving in Congress, he said, "My support for Israel stems largely from my personal faith. In the Bible, God promises Abraham, 'Those who bless you I will bless, and those who curse you I will curse.'"

Not unexpectedly, visiting Israel and meeting with Christian minorities in the broader Middle East has been at the top of the vice president's list of international priorities. However, what struck many as surprising was the cold reception that America's most prominent Christian Zionist politician received during his January visit, not only from Christians in the Holy Land but those across the region as well. It is essential for any concerned about the welfare of Middle Eastern Christians to understand why

It is impossible to recognize Jerusalem as the capital without lending legitimacy to Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem.

an administration that has placed the defense of Christians in the Middle East among its foreign policy objectives has drawn the ire of the very people they claim to be protecting.

When Pence announced his intention to visit the Middle East, he said meeting with Christian leaders in the region was a top priority. However, President Trump's December 2017 decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel triggered a predictable (though, apparently, unanticipated) backlash from Christians across the region.

Following the announcement, the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, Tawadros II, declined the vice president's invitation to meet during his four-day visit—the Coptic pope rejected one of the most openly Christian vice presidents in recent history. This was followed by similar reactions from Christian clergy in Bethlehem. Also notably absent from the final itinerary was a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem after the church's custodian of the keys refused to be present at the event. Consequently, the trip was limited to meetings with Israeli politicians and visits to Jewish holy sites. Pence did not meet with a single indigenous Christian leader in the Holy Land.

A history of violence

When the United Nations in 1947 originally proposed creating the states of Israel and Palestine out of the territory that had previously been under British custodianship, it set aside Jerusalem to be an international city. But in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. East Jerusalem—home to the Old City and its Holy Sites—remained under Jordanian rule until the Israelis occupied the West Bank during the Six Day War of 1967.

Under international law, territory gained by a country during a war can only remain occupied until a final peace agreement between the belligerent nations settles its final status. In the meantime, nothing can be done to alter the demography of the area in dispute.

Israel, however, proceeded in 1967 to unify the municipal governments of East and West Jerusalem. This was followed by formal annexation in 1980. Since 1967, Israeli settlements have grown up in East Jerusalem, changing the demographic character of the city. In the current political climate, it is impossible to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel without also lending legitimacy to Israel's contentious policies in the portion of the city occupied since 1967. This, in turn, exacerbates tensions between Israelis and Palestinians.

But while the threat of violence is detrimental to

Baptist News Global

everyone in Jerusalem, how does legitimizing Israel's unilateral actions specifically harm Christians in the city?

Breaching the status quo

While international law speaks of preserving the demographic status quo of areas under military occupation, Christians in Jerusalem speak of a different kind of status quo—one that exists between the city's religious groups. The religious status quo is not a single legal document but a collection of traditions, treaties, and informal agreements dating back to the 18th century that helps maintain the delicate balance of

power that has existed in the sharing of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem—the first status quo decree dates from the reign of Ottoman Sultan Osman III in 1757. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, all subsequent governing authorities in Jerusalem—including the British (1917-1948), the Jordanians (1948-1967), and the Israelis (1967-present)—have all affirmed the status quo as legally binding.

Taken together, the status quo agreements guarantee each religious group access to their holy sites by placing a freeze on their property holdings in perpetuity from the time of the agreement. In other words, as a result of the status quo, no religious group in Jerusalem should ever have to fear the expansion of any other group to their detriment.

However, following the Israeli annexation of the Old City, Christians have repeatedly raised the alarm that the status quo is in jeopardy. In 2017, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem issued three letters identifying the crisis of the shifting status quo. They wrote, "We see in these actions a systematic attempt to undermine the integrity of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and to weaken the Christian presence."

Former Ambassador Patrick N. Theros, representative to the U.S. of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, said these challenges to the status quo pose "an existential threat to Christian Churches in the Holy Land." Speaking about the effect on churches, Theros said, "Some actions are motivated by politics while others appear purely mercenary in character. Each action targets church properties, properties without whose revenue no church in the Holy Land can maintain the most important Holy Sites in the world."

Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem has allowed groups of radical nationalists, such as Ateret Cohanim, to settle



Ivanka Trump and U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin celebrate the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, left, while Israelis in Tel Aviv protest the killing of Palestinians in Gaza.



there. Unlike most Israelis, these settler groups are not content with the current Jewish presence in Jerusalem and are intent upon making Jerusalem an exclusively Jewish city through land acquisition. Their U.S.-based affiliate calls on its website for "a united Jerusalem that belongs solely to the Jewish people." Stephen Colecchi, director of the International Justice and Peace office of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, recalled a visit earlier this year by a delegation of Catholic bishops. "I found myself walking through the Old City of Jerusalem with Catholic clergy," said Colecchi, and the visiting religious leaders were "liter-

ally spat upon by settlers who openly showed contempt for their Christian presence."

'Hell on Earth'

President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel comes within the context of the threatened status quo. Last year, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem called attention to three key developments that represent a concerted effort to gradually make it more difficult for the church to maintain its property holdings. The first is a legal dispute between the Greek Orthodox Church and Ateret Cohanim, which had bribed an official of the patriarchate. A real estate transaction transpired between the settler organization and church officials who, according to the patriarch, were not authorized to act in the matter. The decision rendered by a Court of First Instance gave legal validation to these secret land deals, setting a frightening precedent in the eyes of many Palestinian Christians. The decision has been appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court.

The second is a proposed piece of legislation that authorizes Israel to retroactively seize any lands on which church rights have been transferred to private investors. If this bill passes the Knesset, church leaders fear that it will result in significant state appropriations of church lands.

Most recently, however, the city of Jerusalem's decision (which is currently suspended) to tax church properties that are not exclusively used for worship poses an even greater challenge to the churches' already strained financial resources. The taxes would be applied to any property that is not actual worship space. These taxes are problematic for church-related properties and could constitute a

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Three new books—and well-funded research—plumb better living through gratitude.

Getty Images

A recent study found that people who wrote “gratitude letters”—turning away from the “toxic emotions” stirred by negative thoughts to elucidate thankfulness—reported significantly better mental health four weeks and 12 weeks after their writing exercise ended.



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according to the online magazine of the University of California, Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center. The center is the nexus for the Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude project, with more than \$3 million in research grants and outreach programs.

GOLDBERG ISN'T writing gratitude letters. You don't see the gratitude spin until nearly the end of his latest book. *Suicide of the West* delineates at length a conservative's take on the grim side of populism, economic selfishness, and rampant resentment. As rival camps compete in Olympian duels of identity politics, claims of victimhood, and Trump-era ideological warfare, we are endangering what he considers to be the "miraculous" gifts of capitalism and democracy. The way out of the morass? Gratitude.

As angry as we all are, as confused, as split into "right," "left," and "mushy middle," as we are, Goldberg says, "We are all sick of complaining. There is a decency in

the American spirit that is responding to this, that says, 'Can we take two seconds to talk about how (our situation) is not as bleak as it looks?' and that says there are overlaps in our Venn diagrams where we can remember the things we all want to honor in our lives. In that overlap is where people who disagree can start." He says, speaking of culture and politics, "I have changed my orientation and gratitude is [now] part of my path."

Goldberg, who describes himself as cul-

"It's an urgent moment to focus on gratitude, to understand what it is and how it inspires us to be our best selves." —Diana Butler Bass

turally Jewish, offers a God-optional vision of gratitude that draws on two key holidays he observes: Passover, rooted in retelling a history of freedom in the present tense as if each of us has been released from bondage, and his favorite holiday, Thanksgiving, when "you give thanks to God, feed people, and have a couple of Bloody Marys."

"Gratitude is the opposite of entitlement and resentment. Gratitude says, 'You didn't have to do this and I'm appreciative that you did.' It can be a difficult thing to maintain. But it opens your heart and it opens your eyes and it allows you to talk about what consensus can look like."

Bass, author of the new book *Grateful*, also presents gratitude as a life raft keeping body and soul afloat in fraught times. She was flabbergasted when she heard Goldberg say such things in a radio interview the very same April day she wrote about gratitude and moral consensus in a *New York Times* opinion page essay.

Flabbergasted and delighted but, on reflection, not surprised. She had landed on the same spot. The upheaval of the 2016 election so upset Bass that she initially sought to rewrite her book contract to pick a different topic. Now, says Bass, she's glad she stuck to it.

Bass began her work with two questions. If a 2014 Pew Research Center survey found

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New & Noteworthy



Dignity in Displacement

Struck by the tragic stories of immigrants trying to enter eastern and southern Europe, Patrick Chamoiseau, a French author from Martinique, explores what it means to be a global community in a time of mass displacement in *Migrant Brothers: A Poet's Declaration of Human Dignity*. Yale University Press

Silent Grief

Based on real events, *September* (originally released as *Septiembre, Un Llanto En Silencio*) depicts the coming-of-age of Theresa, a young girl who loses her hearing during a guerrilla terrorist bombing in Guatemala. Guatemalan director Kenneth Müller captures Theresa's struggle as she navigates a grieving nation. Netflix

Racism in the Name of Jesus

In *Plantation Jesus: Race, Faith, and a New Way Forward*, Skot Welch and Rick Wilson tackle the racist language and imagery plaguing the contemporary church. Using discussion questions, resources, and exercises, Welch and Wilson confront white supremacy and point toward the true gospel. Herald Press

Signed and Sealed

Minneapolis-based singer-songwriter Rachel Kurtz fuses soul, Americana, and blues in *Love, Rachel Kurtz*. The 13-song album of original works is a testament to womanhood and "fierce motherhood." Kurtz's final track, "Single Parenting," is an anthem for "anyone that understands the stark reality of raising children alone." rachelkurtz.com

Old-Time Music, New Community

TWENTY YEARS ago, Old Crow Medicine Show, the 21st century old-time string band, began as a gigantic all-or-nothing bet on the viability of American traditions long left for dead. The kind of bet that only foolish young people could make. In 1998, fiddling front-man Ketch Secor, freshly rejected by his high school girlfriend, gathered a band of like-minded pickers and took off from upstate New York on an epic transcontinental busk-a-thon. One guy in the van was Critter Fuqua, Secor's best friend from their school days in Harrisonburg, Va. The rest were neo-folk enthusiasts from the rural Northeast.

For the next few months, the newly named Old Crow Medicine Show pulled into towns that were barely on the map, stood in front of a centrally located store, and turned loose a blaze of ancient American music, fueled by punk-rock energy and abandon. The people came and



Old Crow Medicine Show

Today they are full-fledged members of the Opry and record for a major label, Columbia Records Nashville. Bandmates have come and gone. But for Old Crow's two remaining founders, the childhood friends Secor and Fuqua, their youthful bet has paid off, and they are now about the business of paying back. They get to bring young country neo-traditionalists onto the Opry as their guests. In 2016, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum commissioned Old Crow to record a complete reimagining of Bob Dylan's classic, made-in-Nashville two-record set, *Blonde on Blonde*.

That commitment to honoring the ties that bind a culture and a community is right up front in the title of their new album, *Volunteer*. Yes, the band has resided in the Volunteer State for the past 18 years, but it goes deeper than that. The Old Crow phenomenon is built on a communitarian ethos of volunteerism that goes back to the band's creation story. They showed up in village squares and volunteered to play, and townspeople in turn volunteered to feed and shelter them. Today the band's touring arrangements are more

formalized. But if you poke around on the internet, you can find recent video of Secor and Fuqua giving free concerts at Nashville-area nursing homes and schools.

Secor, especially, has become a real pillar-of-the-community type. He's married to that same girlfriend who dumped him 20 years ago, Lydia Peelle, a fiction writer of some note. They have two young children and, a couple of years ago, they led in the founding of Episcopal School of Nashville, a church-related and spiritually based institution created to offer a rigorous and nurturing education to children from a variety of ethnic, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Secor, whose father spent his professional life as headmaster of a series of Southern Episcopal schools, is now chair of the school's families committee.

In music and in life, Old Crow Medicine Show is still following that less-travelled path they set out on 20 years ago, and the longer they walk it, the deeper and more meaningful it gets. ■

Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel White Boy.



Old Crow Medicine Show turned loose a blaze of ancient American music, fueled by punk-rock energy and abandon.

cheered, and enough money fell into the banjo case to keep the gas tank full. The latter-day pioneers never went to sleep hungry, and they came back to the East convinced that they were onto something real and life-changing. It was a spiritual path of sorts, one rooted in the noise that began when, in the brief decades before a race-based slavery system took hold, the banjo of the kidnapped African and the fiddle of the indentured Celt met after hours in colonial tobacco fields.

Two years after their august founding, Old Crow was playing guest spots on the Grand Ole Opry. Another decade or so, and they had a platinum single and a Grammy.

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78 percent of U.S. adults reported they feel grateful on a regular basis, “why aren’t we stress-free and healthier and happier?” And why did another survey from Pew find that the 2016 electorate was angrier, more fearful, and more divided than ever? “I set out to look for ways to peel under the layers and find something everyone can celebrate,” says Bass.

Along the way, writing in her gratitude journal and interviewing far and wide, Bass discovered unexpected blessings. Since the 2016 election, she says, “We have begun asking each other what really matters. We have begun more honest self-reflection. We are examining our mutual love for democracy, our mutual ideas about what is unacceptable. People are examining their own

“Existence is gift. And there is nothing you can do in return other than praise God.” —Stanley Hauerwas

traditions, rediscovering ethical lines, and finding friends among their enemies.

“At this moment, when people are so fraught with negative emotions, they really do want to reach for something that is positive, that is doable, that makes sense. It’s an urgent moment to focus on gratitude, to understand what it is and how it inspires us to be our best selves.”

She, too, takes a seat at the Thanksgiving table, “where people celebrate abundance, serve one another and make sure all are fed. People give with no expectation of return, and joy replaces obligation. This vision of gratitude is truly virtuous, sustains the common good, ensures a circle of equality, and strengthens community.”

BUT IS GRATITUDE really booming beyond bookshelf exhortations? Renowned theologian Stanley Hauerwas, author of another recent book, *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson*, is dubious. He sees many Americans addicted to the idea of personal autonomy, uncomfortable with being beholden to one another, and prone to viewing “gifts” more in terms of a



Fred Rogers in *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*

THE POWER OF KINDNESS

THE NEW DOCUMENTARY about the life of beloved children’s television host Fred Rogers, *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?*, is not merely a nostalgia trip. It stirs more than fond memories: a collective hope that we might discover our kinder selves. Fred Rogers made kindness look easy.

Some folks are skeptical—they remember Mister Rogers as nice, but not brilliant, sweet, but not powerful. Directed by Morgan Neville, *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* reveals Fred Rogers as an activist for the common good—a singular figure who cared enough about people to give them what they needed, even if they didn’t know to want it. Footage from 1969 of Rogers testifying to a U.S. Senate subcommittee poised to reduce public television funding—melting the heart of a previously resistant senator—isn’t just a heartstring-pulling moment of grace but shows how speaking truth to the powers can sometimes convert them.

And more, the racial integration of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* wasn’t an accident but an outgrowth of Rogers’ own evolving commitments to a rainbow world. There’s an act of service in *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* that evokes a ritual of life-expanding religion that is more notable because it is rarely practiced: the washing of feet.

Then there’s the moment when Fred

Rogers shows his anger toward the systems that would treat children as consumers, selling them toxins. I know what children need, he says. They need to know they are loved just as they are. They need protection, not from pain but from those who would market it. They need mentors who will help them discover their purpose for the common good. And they need adults who will listen, not only so the children can learn but so that those of us who fear we may have left the wonder of childlikeness behind (or never had it in the first place) can rediscover what it is to be loved, to love, and to be good.

Some may say, “Blessed are the meek, but the meek never won any wars, or grew any economies, or captured the most Twitter followers.” But I think we’ve got “meek” all wrong—perhaps to be truly meek means to be capable of force but to choose not to use it unless that would do more harm. Fred Rogers wasn’t naive—he was well aware of the world’s suffering (to use a puppet to help children deal with the assassination of Bobby Kennedy is not to hide from reality). But he also knew that the way to peace with others requires us to disarm our self-hatred. ■

Gareth Higgins is an Irish writer and founder of moviesandmeaning.com and www.irelandretreats.com.

transaction, something one manipulates. We fundamentally misunderstand the idea of a gift, he says, taking the question up a theological notch from the muck of politics and economics.

“We tend to think that we exist and then God gives us something and we respond appropriately. But we don’t receive a gift—we ARE the gift. Existence is gift. And there is nothing you can do in return other than praise God, and that’s a very difficult thing for many people to do. If you associate gratitude with what makes us joyful, you begin to see pretty clearly that it is not a manipulative game you are in. This is [Karl] Barth saying, ‘Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.’”

While joy is not easily quantified, research into gratitude and its benefits is on the uptick. This is thanks in large part to the John Templeton Foundation, which has put millions of dollars into neuroscience research, education, and outreach programs, as guided by founder Sir John Templeton’s vision that “gratitude, humility, and an open mind can be the keys to a better world.”

Summer Allen, research writer for the Greater Good Science Center, echoes Bass in calling gratitude “a survival technique.” Allen says, “What has come out of the research [into gratitude] is that there are actually activities people can do that will change how they see the world through a gratefulness lens. It doesn’t mean you don’t work for change or deal with problems. It means you have a way to survive amid all the negative news and experiences.”

But wait, wasn’t mindfulness supposed to be all that?

Didn’t it careen out of Buddhism into popular psychology, onto websites and into magazines, and morph into countless doodads, handbooks, and trinkets among 200,000 results for a “mindfulness” search on Amazon?

“That’s a concern,” says Allen. “[Gratitude] could be trivialized into a hashtag movement.”

It remains to be seen if today’s gratitude wave changes the world or winds up as another coffee-cup slogan. ■

Cathy Lynn Grossman is a former national religion reporter for USA Today and Religion News Service.

Reviewed by Whitney Parnell

TO UNDERSTAND AND BE UNDERSTOOD

I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness, by Austin Channing Brown. Convergent Books.

I READ Austin Channing Brown’s incredible book in one sitting. This is one that every black woman needs to read to be validated and every white person needs to read to receive some perspective (and empathy) that will help inform their behavior and interactions. In this short book, Brown has concisely articulated the burdens, questions, and frustrations that I find myself experiencing daily as a black woman.

Brown brilliantly navigates explaining the intersections of blackness and womanhood, the microaggressions between workspaces and social circles, and the constant fears that so many black people face around losing everything (including life) in one moment. She “goes there” by highlighting that churches can present the most danger and racism for black people, and even chooses to address the riskiest topic of them all: the immense harm that can be caused by well-meaning, progressive white people.

Brown sets up all of this in a manner that allows readers to understand *why* black women may be angry but does not permit readers to ever *call* black women angry. Her ability to simultaneously parallel and intertwine so many dynamics of the black experience allows readers to see both immense complexity and basic clarity at the same time. She successfully weaves in personal narratives, news headlines, and popular culture to paint a beautiful representation of both the collective experiences of blackness and every black woman’s unique individuality. As I read, I could simultaneously see Brown as myself, as a fellow “sista,” and as a person who has overcome and achieved incredible things.

Amid all the tough conversations that Brown personally has with her readers,

what I most appreciate is that I closed the book feeling empowered—not just because I felt understood, but because I felt proud to be a black woman. Brown celebrates blackness throughout this book: Our strength, our talents, our culture, our intelligence, and our magic. This book reads as a lesson and a love letter. It teaches with-

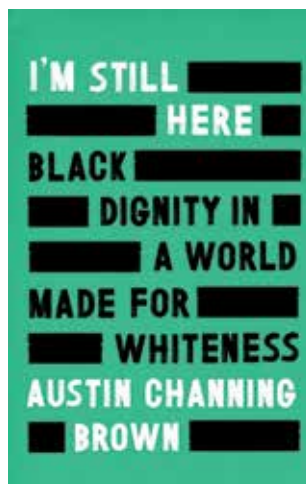
out a single lecture, and it preaches without a single sermon. This book tells it like it is while still being digestible.

White readers may still experience some fragility that accompanies the truth-to-power that’s spoken, but Brown’s approach is clearly through a lens of empathy to build understanding, not blaming for the sake of shaming. And as a black woman, I appreciate that it never

felt like she was giving me advice about how to best navigate my daily experiences. She lifted up my challenges in the form of validation and understanding, but for once this was not followed by a lecture that I should show extra grace, extra patience, extra strength, and extra everything else. It was a relief, particularly in relation to the expectations that are laid on me as a Christian.

When I finished the book, I felt empowered to live my best life. I felt strengthened to endure because Brown insinuated that I was built for this and that I was not alone. My hope is that other black women who read this will feel similarly, and that everyone else can be empathetic allies who are able to share the lessons learned with others and join us in solidarity in the work ahead. ■

Whitney Parnell is a black millennial activist, singer, and co-founder and CEO of Service Never Sleeps.



Reviewed by Wendy Besel Hahn

LESSONS IN JUST PARENTING

Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America,
by Jennifer Harvey. Abingdon Press.



ON THE MORNING of Nov. 9, 2016, I delivered a clumsy lecture to my then 8-year-old son about his responsibility as a white boy in Trump's America: "If you see something, say something. If anyone tells another child she's going to be deported, you must

speak up. Tell your teacher."

Jennifer Harvey created a guide for parents like me, who want to teach our kids to be anti-racist but aren't always sure how: *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*. Ordained in the American Baptist Churches (U.S.A), Harvey is a professor at Drake University whose work focuses on racial justice and white anti-racism. She is also a contributor to *The New York Times* and Huffington Post and the author of *Dear*

The book promotes moving away from a model of color-blindness toward race-conscious parenting.

White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation.

Raising White Kids promotes moving away from a model of color-blindness, which shuts down any discussion of race, toward race-conscious parenting. Harvey draws on many experts. Psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum describes systemic racism as "smog," which affects all people. One study cited in the book found parents of color are 2 to 5 times more likely to discuss race with their children than white parents. Failure to teach white kids about America's unspoken racial scripts leaves kids unprepared to counter racism.

Harvey bases much of her argument on psychologist Janet Helms' taxonomy describing six stages of white identity. As early as preschool age, children notice differences in

As Union Theological Seminary celebrates The Summit, and Sojourners' commitment to bringing justice through faith, we mourn the death and honor the life of a man who embodied God's call to change the world through revolutionary faith.

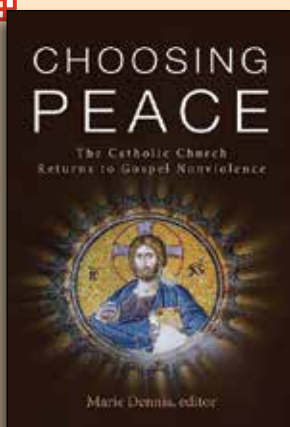
May our mentor, teacher, prophet and friend rest in power.
Your work is done, ours is just beginning.



Rev. Dr. James Hal Cone (1938-2018)

UNION

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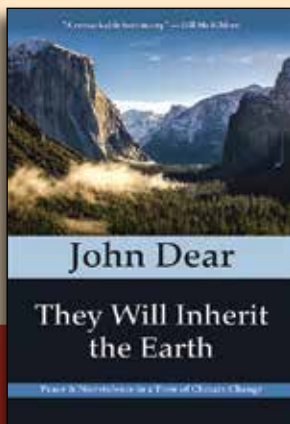
Choosing Peace

The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence

MARIE DENNIS

From an historic conference at the Vatican in 2016 here are contributions by Lisa Sowle Cahill, Terrence J. Rynne, John Dear, Ken Butigan, Rose Marie Berger, and Maria J. Stephan, among others.

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JOHN DEAR

The author of *The Beatitudes of Peace* invites us to return to nonviolence as a way of life, and of living. "Nonviolence is our greatest tool, and here you see it wielded with kindness, firmness, and skill." —BILL McKIBBEN

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race. They engage in play and conversations related to skin color. To illustrate, Harvey shares her 5-year-old nephew's account of choosing teams for dodgeball. Her nephew, who is black, explained how he and his classmates couldn't have "whites v. blacks teams" any more after a teacher overheard them.

"When teachers chose not to explore the reasons not to play racially divided dodgeball," Harvey writes, "these students were left more likely to succumb to tension-filled racial scripts as a result. These kids are going to square off as Black and white in some other way." Instead of silence, which gives kids the impression race is taboo, Harvey suggests that adults acknowledge differences and engage kids in questioning how society values the white race above others.

Harvey shares experiences and conversations she has had with her young children as examples of race-conscious parenting. Among the most dramatic is her account of attending a protest with her 3- and 5-year-old daughters following the shooting of Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Mo. During the rally, her 5-year-old announced, "Black people aren't safe!" followed by the observation, "But we're white, so we're safe! Right?" Harvey's candor about the awkwardness of this moment and her struggle to find a suitable response make the scholarly information she imparts in her book very relatable.

The last chapter explores additional resources such as Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) groups and subscriptions to Safety Pin Box. In concluding her book, Harvey offers a warning: "Being white in a system of white racial hierarchy negatively impacts white people's humanity and health every day, even as it harms and negatively impacts people of color every day. We cannot fully enable children who are white to be healthy until we have created a truly just world."

Raising White Kids helped me reflect on my own parenting practices and offered guidance for how to proceed. I stand by the post-election speech I gave my son, but I now understand this talk needs to be one of many if we're to build a racially just world. ■

Wendy Besel Hahn is a writer living in Reston, Va. She is currently working on a book about growing up non-Mormon in Utah.

Reviewed by Da'Shawn Mosley

A FLOOD OF WONDER

Southernmost, by Silas House. Algonquin Books.

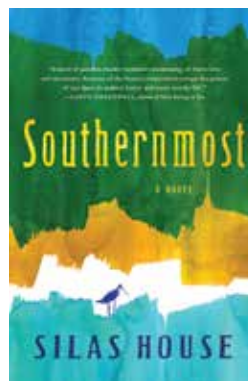
TO BE A FATHER is to be an example, and the writer Silas House knows this well. His latest novel, *Southernmost*, is the story of a father and pastor named Asher who strives to do what's right, while his young son, Justin—who is distrustful of the church—watches.

But Asher's quest for morality places him on a path of unwanted attention and threatens to separate him from Justin, until Asher makes the questionable decision to take his son with him on a journey for which neither of them are prepared.

Rarely have the church's tensions about homosexuality—and how deeply those tensions can fracture a family—been explored in fiction. But with this, his sixth novel, House explores how Asher's relationship with his wife, Lydia, disintegrates when, to Asher's disgust, she turns away a gay couple in need of shelter after a flood. House examines Asher's heart, which is broken over his failure to defend his brother Luke when they were young, forcing Luke to go it alone in dealing with societal hatred over his sexual orientation. In Asher's heart, House finds hope and desire for a faith that welcomes more than it excludes.

"The lush dark green of the trees, Luke's clenched jaw, his refusal to cry," House writes. "Up on the ridge a congregation of starlings arose in a great humming movement of blackness from the hickories, hundreds of birds becoming one undulating mass. A sign, [Asher] had thought back then. A wonder."

Southernmost is full of such beautiful sentences that move with divinity, and House is a master of plot. Almost every major development of his narrative shocks, even though the reader should have seen them coming. I marveled at how many of the novel's plot threads evolved, disappeared, resurfaced, and were eventually resolved.



Many sections of House's book—especially its final pages—contain immense power and grace.

Despite House's skill, *Southernmost* is a moderately flawed book—full of tropes and sometimes heavy-handed. It begins in the middle of a devastating flood—the sort of water imagery that fills almost every novel about Christianity I've ever read.

And the character Lydia is severely underdeveloped, used only in service of the message House wishes to convey about what does and does not constitute good Christian faith. A novel about a preacher shouldn't be preachy, but at moments I wondered whether I had the strength to wade through its waters to get to the other side.

But wade I did, and I'm glad I did, because many sections of House's book—

especially its final pages—contain immense power and grace:

"Asher tipped the cup to the side for him to get more water and the dog continued to stare at him as he lapped up more," House writes. "The whole time his eyes were saying *Thank you so much that's the best damn water I've ever had in my whole entire suffering life.*"

House has written a novel about kindness and mistakes that speaks plenty about both the world we live in and the better world we could be living in. *Southernmost* explores the wages of sin, placed not at the feet of LGBTQA people but with those believers who have dehumanized them.

"We've got to stop this judgment!" Asher tells his congregation early on, partially realizing the error of his ways. It takes the rest of the novel for Asher to fully understand what he's done and what he must do. Perhaps those same words can one day be said about readers of this fine work by Silas House. ■

Da'Shawn Mosley is assistant editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

'An Existential Threat'

Continued from Page 37

double tax for the commercial properties whose lessees already pay these taxes to the city of Jerusalem.

Under these circumstances, the Trump administration's action signals that the United States is willing to turn a blind eye to these developments and their potentially devastating effects on local churches in Jerusalem. Charlie Abou Saada, a Palestinian Christian from Beit Sahour near Bethlehem who has a doctorate in Vatican law, said: "Churches of the Holy Land have always taken a stand for justice and equality, and all in a peaceful way." He worries about the long-term effects of Trump's action. "This provocative act will negatively affect the presence and the future of Christianity here," he said. "Christians are the salt of this land. We are peacemakers. ... If [Christians were ever to] vanish, the Middle East will be hell on the Earth."

If Palestinian Christians believe that the president's action reflects a broader American apathy toward the erosion of religious pluralism in Jerusalem, what can U.S. Christians do to prove otherwise? One of the easiest places to start is by changing the way we visit the Holy Land. Rather than focusing solely on the historical significance of the land for Christianity, we can also make meeting with and listening to Christians who live there now a central part of the experience.

Local Christians often issue an invitation for visiting pilgrims to not only see the dead stones of the Holy Land, but also to visit the "living stones"—Christians who have been living in the land since the time of Pentecost (Acts 2). Sharing these experiences with our families, friends, and neighbors is critical for raising awareness among the American general public.

By gaining a better understanding of the consequences of our elected officials' actions, we can all work to advocate for a U.S. foreign policy that does not endanger either the chances for a just peace in the region or the multireligious character of Jerusalem. Such a policy is vital for ensuring vibrant faith communities—not only for Christians, but also for the hundreds of thousands of Jews and Muslims who also call the Holy City their home. ■

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon is the executive director and Andrew Wickersham is an Ambassador Warren Clark Fellow of Churches for Middle East Peace. In this article, they are not writing as representatives of CMEP.



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Short Takes

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR...

Gail Hyder Wiley

Bio: Gail Hyder Wiley is the organizer of Charlottesville Gathers, a group in Charlottesville, Va., that has taught hundreds of people nonviolent active bystander tactics and encourages resistance against racism, especially resistance led by people of color.

1 What inspired Charlottesville Gathers to organize nonviolent active bystander training? I saw what was happening after the election—that people were getting assaulted and demeaned, and it was just turning into a dangerous place for people who are outside of the spectrum of white privilege. There were a lot of people in December 2016 talking about the resistance, but there didn't seem to be much training going on. I was impressed by the stories of people who used church basements, during the civil rights movement, to teach people nonviolent civil disobedience. I thought, "Okay, I belong to a church that has this big library, and it sits idle some nights, so why don't we use that and bring in people who can help the community learn how to grapple with what we're dealing with."

2 What acts of racism have occurred in Charlottesville since last summer? There has been a string of incidents of white supremacists targeting our community that hasn't made the news: white supremacist stickers placed over the new road sign for "Heather Heyer Way," an activist's tires getting slashed, and countless more insults and threats. Our immigrant neighbors have been fearful as the policies of our current president have become apparent, and the violence of the white supremacists in our area has amplified that fear.

3 What advice do you have for Christians who hesitate to get involved in social justice? There are a lot of people sitting on a lot of knowledge and resources who need to realize that they can apply it to real life. If people could link their church lives with the rest of their lives, I think, as a society, we would be better off, but I also think the church would be better off. I'm not at all shy about saying, "I'm from Westminster Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville and ..." And, in some cases, that attracts people to our church, but, if nothing else, it proves to some people that,



Illustration by Faith-Marie Zambé

"Oh, there are church people who care about this, and they're actually out doing it."

4 In recent months, what has made you hopeful? People finally waking up—including myself. I am on my way to "woke," but I'm not there yet, and I know it. I have learned over the course of examining whiteness and privilege that things that seem perfectly clear to me I can be dead-flat wrong about.

My husband and I led a discussion session on the book *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*—which was recommended for all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) members—and we used the church's study guide. We got some real profound reactions from people, including one woman who said, "I grew up in a very segregated small town in North Carolina, recognized injustice all my life and railed against it, but until this moment I never felt there was anything I could do about it, and now I'm ready to do." The fact that churches have these kinds of resources ... If people just pick them up and start wading in, it's there, it's waiting for you. That makes me hopeful.

—Interview by Da'Shawn Mosley



Bekah Fulton

Da'Shawn Mosley
is assistant editor of
Sojourners magazine.
He read this poem at a
Sojourners-organized
worship service, above,
before this spring's
March for Our Lives
against gun violence in
Washington, D.C.

In the Mourning

"Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning." —Psalm 30:5

This mourning begins with eyes:
ours which open
and the eyes a gun closed,
the barrel a chamber in which there is found no heart,
for every latch and mechanism of the machine moves with menace
and every finger entangled and wound around its trigger
draws closed the stage curtains of peace.

This mourning begins with flesh—
our stance under a persistent sun
as a body stretches across a coroner's table like the hide of a deer.
In such an occasion, a body's bullet holes
become mouths. They speak of the perils our muscles
hope not to know. They reveal what it's like
to be whole and come undone
and linger like litter.

Parkland.
Pulse.
Emanuel.
Columbine.

For you, we combine this mourning
with the mournings that have become before it.
We take complacent hands and give them calluses.
We take complicit knuckles and rap them against the door of justice.
We take stubborn feet and urge them to move.
We take fallen tears and bend them into waves.

For you, we make this mourning a mourning that can end grief entirely,
dismantle and, at the same time, renew:
fix what should have never been broken.

For you, we walk the roads
that many have wandered before us.

The procession of J.F.K., his casket blanketed
by a flag red as blood. The longing for King, this city
once ablaze when weeping failed to quell sadness.

For you, the gun-wounded, the gunned down,
and the loved ones who were left behind,
we speak in prayer
and advance in action.

For you, the gun-wounded, the gunned down,
and the loved ones who were left behind,
we speak in love
and we don't go quietly.

The Sheepy Smell of God

WE FIND OURSELVES AMID “ordinary time.” Most of the liturgical calendar, like our lives, is comprised of ordinary time. Yet our readings this month remind us that the extraordinary can be found in the ordinary, just as God can be found in us. Each of the gospels this month shows us Jesus growing more into his ministry as well as his identity as the Christ. Like us, he is not always comfortable with who he is. We see him: questioning who touched and was healed by his cloak (Mark 5:21-43); rejected by his hometown (Mark 6:1-6); said to be a prophet raised from the dead (Mark 6:14-29); acting like a good shepherd (Mark 6:30-34); retreating after feeding the 5,000 because he does not want to be forced into being king (John 6:1-21).

Even amid miracles and messianic titles, there is an ordinariness about Jesus in these stories. We glimpse a familiar narrative of the suffering and joy found in following God’s call. For some, this interpretation may be too much of a “Christology from below,” too little emphasis on Jesus as divine. Yet the gift of ordinary time reminds us that what we deem too quotidian, too human, might reveal God to us after all.



Pearl Maria Barros teaches in the religious studies department at Santa Clara University in California.

[JULY 1]

‘Be Made Well’

Lamentations 3:22-33; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

LAMENTATIONS AND Psalm 30 remind us that God’s anger is momentary, but God’s love is forever. It can be frightening to think of a God who “causes grief” (Lamentations 3:32). The image of an angry God has led to theologies that have often glorified suffering—particularly the suffering of historically minoritized people. Women, people of color, the differently abled and socioeconomically disadvantaged were taught for too long that their suffering was willed by God. Rather than push against the social structures of injustice that contribute to their pain, they were encouraged to embrace their suffering.

But the Markan account of the woman with the hemorrhage models for us a different way of engaging suffering—our own and that of others. Lest this be read as a Christian supercessionist positioning of the gospel lesson over Hebrew scriptures, remember that it is the woman—likely a Jewish woman—whose faith makes her well (Mark 5:34). In the story, Jesus does not heal her; she heals herself. She trusts the voice inside of her that says, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well” (Mark 5:28). Jesus does not admonish her for touching

him; instead he tells her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease” (verse 34). If our faith is to make us and others well, then it should witness to a God whose “favor is for a lifetime” (Psalm 30:5).

[JULY 8]

Pangs of Prophecy

Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalm 123;
2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

WE SEE IN THESE readings that a prophet is never welcome in her own land. Whether it is God reminding Ezekiel, whether people “hear or refuse to hear ... they shall know that there has been a prophet among them” (2:5) or Paul realizing that “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9), we learn that being a prophet involves much suffering. Rejected by the people of his hometown, Jesus laments, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house” (Mark 6:4). Prophets tend to be misunderstood by the people of their own time and place

precisely because a prophet is always calling people to see beyond that time and place. They expand our vision by calling us out of complacency with injustice, reorienting us to the liberating will of God.

Who are prophets in our world today? I think of Malala Yousafzai, whose demand that girls be educated in Pakistan caused her to be attacked by the Taliban; having sur-

To be a shepherd is to be a leader; to be a good shepherd is to be a good leader.

vived the attack, she continues advocating for girls’ right to education. I think of Rosa Parks, whose refusal to relinquish her seat on the bus to a white person helped propel the civil rights movement. I think of Archbishop Óscar Romero, whose call for justice for the poor people in El Salvador cost him his life. Who do you think of? And do you ever think of yourself as a prophet? How might God be calling you to proclaim the good news?

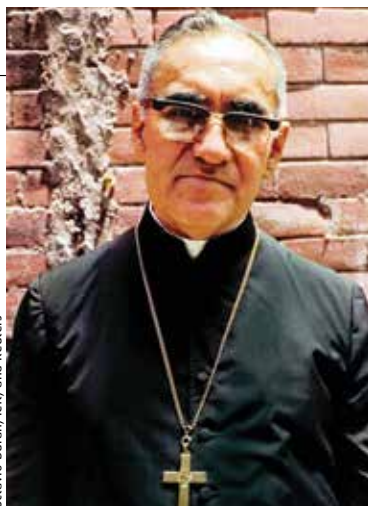
[JULY 15]

Refuge in the Psalm

Amos 7:7-15; Psalm 85:8-13;
Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

THE THEME OF PROPHECY continues this week. In Amos, we see the prophet cast out for speaking truth, while in Mark we see the prophet John the Baptist gruesomely killed. It is evident that prophets are not only unwelcome in their own lands, they are also unsafe. Interestingly, the gospel notes that Herod—who would eventually, albeit reluctantly, order John the Baptist’s death—“liked to listen to” John, even though when he listened to John he was “greatly perplexed” (Mark 6:20). Although most of us might not like to admit it, we are a lot like Herod. We are fascinated and inspired by the prophets of our day, but we often lack the courage to follow their lead.

If history teaches us anything, it is that those who challenge the unjust status quo tend to find themselves cast out or worse.



Archbishop Óscar Romero, left, and human rights advocate Malala Yousafzai.



No wonder we don't want to be prophetic! This week, we might take refuge in reflecting on the words of Psalm 85: "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for God will speak peace to God's people, to God's faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts" (verse 8). As we turn to God in our hearts, may we find the strength and courage to work toward a world in which "righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

[JULY 22]

Shepherding Well

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

WHAT DOES IT mean to be a good shepherd? Jeremiah tells us that a good shepherd does not "scatter God's flock" or "drive them away"; instead a good shepherd "attends to the sheep" (Jeremiah 23:2). Psalm 23 reminds us that the Lord is our shepherd, guiding us through life and death. In the gospel, we see Jesus moved by compassion for the crowd "because they were like sheep without a shepherd," and he begins to "teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). Jesus, of course, will eventually be referred to as *the* Good Shepherd. To be a shepherd is to be a leader; to be a good shepherd is to be a good leader.

In his 2013 address to the world's priests at Holy Thursday Mass, Pope Francis noted that good priests (and all ecclesial leaders) should "smell like the sheep." For a shepherd to "smell like the sheep" means that he (or she!) attends to the concerns, needs, and hopes of the people he or she serves. It means understanding leadership and power in terms of service. In examining our own lives, where do we exercise leadership and power? Are we shepherding well? Do we smell like the sheep?

[JULY 29]

Miracles in Our Midst

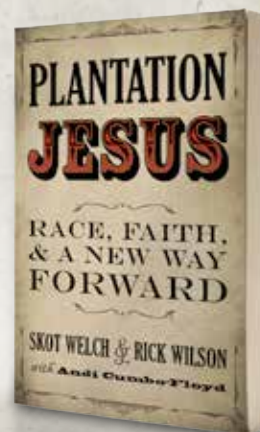
2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18;
Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

WE ENCOUNTER miracles this week. In 2 Kings, Elisha trusts God's word that "20 loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain" will not only feed all 100 people but also yield some food left over (2 Kings 4:42-44). Similarly, Jesus blesses "five barley loaves and two fish," which not only multiply enough to feed all 5,000 people but also to fill 12 baskets worth of leftovers (John 6:1-13). It is tempting to think of these miracles in supernatural terms (certainly a possible interpretation). But the miracles in these stories may have less to do with the magical multiplication of food and more to do with the relationship between people and God they portray. In Jesus' time, it was typical for people to carry food with them if they were traveling: Consider how the boy in the story has bread and fish with him. Now consider what might happen if everyone in the crowd who brought food with them decided to share that food with those who had none. The miracle in the story becomes Jesus' ability to move people out of their selfishness, inspiring them to nourish each other. In both stories of miraculous feedings, we see how God transforms our inadequacies into abundance when we care for each other.

Later in the gospel, there is another miracle: Jesus "walking on the sea" (John 6:19). The disciples are terrified, but Jesus tells them, "It is I; do not be afraid" (verse 20). Miraculously, Jesus calls them, and us, to move beyond our fears and gives us the grace to do so. ■

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#HeToo, Brute?

THIS MONTH marks a planned historic meeting of hundreds of evangelical leaders with the president of the United States, currently Donald J. Trump. At press time, the actual number of participants had not been tallied, but you know what the Bible says, wherever two or more evangelical leaders are gathered a pulpit must be provided for each one or there's gonna be trouble. (Or words to that effect.) Not to mention a good sound system, a wireless microphone to facilitate breathless pacing, and a telegenic congregation. And don't forget the offering. That private jet's not going to pay for itself.

And speaking of private jets, not all of America's top evangelical leaders will arrive in well-appointed Gulfstreams. Some will travel in smaller jets, a lesser witness that suggests their owners have not earned the full fruit of God's blessings. Turns out, their last emotional appeal from the altar failed to touch the hearts and checkbooks of their followers. (Their advisers *warned* them to keep a straight face when



century. But it's still not clear what these Christian leaders will say to the president. What words of biblical wisdom has he not *already* taken into his heart? After all, Trump's religious bona fides are well known to the evangelical community, which was deeply moved when he said, "Nobody reads the Bible more than me."

Even his alleged liaison with a porn star was dismissed by evangelical leaders such as Franklin Graham, who explained that Trump is "not the pastor of this country," and Family Research Council head Tony Perkins, who insists that Trump gets "a mulligan ... a do-over here." A "mulligan" is a golfing term that means a free stroke not counted on the score card. So, presumably, to the 18 other women *USA Today* lists as accusing Donald Trump of consensual and nonconsensual encounters,

Tony Perkins would simply say: "mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan, mulligan." (Evangelical leaders are VERY forgiving, because, as they say, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, especially Muslims.")

THE MEETING will take place in Washington, D.C., probably at the Trump International Hotel, one of the few affiliated properties where his name has not yet been removed by regretful franchisees

wanting their businesses to appear, you know, more reputable. Although the hotel is known for its high-priced amenities, its food service has not been reviewed favorably. Not a problem.

With so many evangelicals gathered in one place, could a potluck be far behind? However, it's likely that most of the participants will be men—all members in good standing of the #HeToo movement—which suggests there'll be lots of buckets of chicken purchased on the way over, and very few vegetables. One doubts there will even be Jell-O, which was the preferred potluck vegetable when I was a young evangelical. (Of course, now scientists have determined that Jell-O is not an actual food, and not appropriate for human consumption. As opposed to, say, a Twinkie.)

On the plus side, the Trump International Hotel's coat-check room will have cubbies to store the handguns that many evangelical preachers insist on carrying, and larger bins for assault rifles. These will belong to the more prescient Christian leaders armed and ready to fight the enemies of freedom, which Sean Hannity warns are growing stronger by the day. (He's not identified a specific enemy, but I'm guessing it's either LGBT people or women seeking prenatal care. Pretty much a toss-up.)

With so many evangelicals gathering together in praise of Donald Trump, this really seems like a "gospel moment." So, I have several questions for these Christian leaders.

Just kidding. I only have one: Is there no limit to your hypocrisy? ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

When evangelical leaders jostle for a presidential photo op, it could get ugly.

promising God would give back a hundredfold, but frankly it's hard not to giggle. I doubt any of those Prosperity Gospel preachers actually *believes* what they're promising. But to be fair to their gullible congregants, a hundredfold is a much higher rate of return than your average 401(k).)

The June gathering is designed to express unquestioned solidarity with the president and to shore up the evangelical vote ahead of the upcoming midterms. Attendees will be a veritable Who's Whom of Christian leaders adhering to the best religious thinking of the 17th

Ken Davis

Sojourners community, 1976
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